CAPTAIN KITUK

ROY J. SNELL

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CAPTAIN KITUK

Two rough-looking men stood not twenty feet from him with rifles leveled at his head. FRONTISPIECE. *See page 186.*

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BY

ROY J. SNELL

With Illustrations by

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	A High Resolve	1
II	The All-Alaska Sweepstake	8
III	A Caribou Farm	22
IV	Launching of the *Sea Wolf*	36
V	Caught in the Ice Pack	45
VI	The Steatite Lamp	57
VII	A Strange Adventure	70
VIII	Nagyuktogmiuts	82
IX	A Call Out of the Night	97
X	The Explorer	105
XI	Lost	117
XII	A Fight with Indians	127
XIII	Their Schooner Drifts Out to Sea	136
XIV	Saved	145
XV	Black Nuggets	155
XVI	A Grateful Miner	168
XVII	Kituk a Prisoner	179
XVIII	The Rescue	190
XIX	Saving the *Sadie*	201
XX	Success at Last	212

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Two rough-looking men stood not twenty feet from him with rifles leveled at his head . . . . . *Frontispiece*

"That's her, over beyond the wharf" . . PAGE 36

This time the rifle rang out . . . . " 95

Kituk's strong hand was there to grasp him and drag him from the sea . . . " 149

CAPTAIN KITUK

CHAPTER I

A HIGH RESOLVE

"Don't you trade!" exclaimed Kituk, twisting his sinewy little body into a knot of disgust. "Don't you do it! Your fox skin is worth three times that much." Then, seeing that the aged Eskimo did not understand, he shouted, "Sulie! Sulie! Sulie!" (More! More! More!) Petie Milard, petty trader on the Arctic coast, seized him by the hood of his parka and sent him spinning into the native skin boat which lay alongside the gasoline schooner.

"You stay there!" Pete exclaimed, with a volley of oaths. "You're no good to trade!"

"You're no good to the Eskimo people!" exclaimed Kituk, starting up as if to climb back on board.

But Kituk did not go back on the

schooner. What was the use? His people were starving. They must have flour and baking powder and sugar, and whether they must have them or not they would have tobacco and tea. Pete Milard had the things they wanted, and no other supply would be in from Nome for two weeks. What could they do but trade their valuable skins to him at his own price which meant poverty to them for a year to come? And every year it was the same. Pete's little gasoline schooner, slipping in and out among the ice floes, appeared at the Cape long before the mail steamer could get through, and always it found the Eskimo people out of food, ready to trade anything they had for a bite to eat. And Pete had quite lost his conscience long ago, so it was not a matter of great concern to him if the Eskimo people were kept always in this condition; indeed, it was greatly to his advantage, for if they should get a supply ahead some year, what would become of this rich spring haul of his?

Kituk thought all this over as the skin canoe rocked back and forth, bumping against the side of the schooner. But what could he do about it? Suddenly he sat up straight. It came to him like a flash. He should save his money and buy a trading schooner! Then he would be the first one to reach the Cape and not Pete Milard. And he would trade fairly with his people. This sudden new thought cheered him. The sullen look vanished from his face, and he pulled gladly at his oar as the skin canoe swung away from the schooner and the "Who-hoop! Who-a-hoop!" of the natives was mingled with the jangling of the bell and the screeching of the whistle of the departing schooner.

Thud, thud, Kituk's feet came down on the smooth race course of ice. They were having a celebration of the first coming of the walrus on their way north. In olden days this had been the year's event,

celebrated with great ceremony by the native witch doctors. But since the white man had taught them another religion which seemed very good, they had given up the practices of the native priests. But every year they must have some sign of rejoicing at the sight of their year's greatest food supply. This year it was a marathon race, participated in by all the youths of the village. The government man had laid out a course and appointed judges and offered a prize, — a hundred pounds of sugar. Such wealth! The race was ten miles. Kituk, fit as a young caribou, had entered. Now he was nearing the end; his breath was still coming with the even pant, pant of a reindeer on the trail. He was easily winner, he knew that.

"Here, put this over your shoulders," he heard a moment later. It was Thompson, the government man, who threw a heavy blanket across his shoulders.

"Did I win?" the boy asked simply.

"Win?" laughed the white man. "You're a great runner, Kituk. Some day you'll go to Nome for the eighteen-mile marathon. But that doesn't pay very well. Say!" he exclaimed suddenly, "why don't you make up a team of these native dogs and enter the winter, all-Alaska, sweepstake dog race?"

"I don't know," said Kituk, looking puzzled, doubting that an Eskimo might enter that great race.

"Why not?" exclaimed the other with enthusiasm. "Why, man, the purse is ten thousand dollars!"

"Ten thousand dollars?" Kituk looked more puzzled than ever. Ten thousand did not mean much to him. Before the white man came, his people had counted only to five hundred, and seldom so far as that. The man who could take his son on his knees and count that high was a great man. "Ten thousand dollars?" he repeated slowly. "Would that buy a trading schooner?"

"A trading schooner?" exclaimed the teacher, "I should say it would! A trading schooner and its cargo. That is what it would buy! But," he paused to think, "what's the idea? Why a trading schooner?"

Kituk wrapped the blanket closely about him and sat down on the drift-wood log near by. Then slowly he told the government man of his ambitions and his reasons for them; how he had been watching his people robbed year after year by the unscrupulous traders, and how he longed to be able to relieve them. He told, too, very simply, of his ambition to do something worth while to win back to his family the name which had stood for power among his people before his father's brain had been crazed by the whaler's whisky.

The young government man looked at the boy with growing admiration. "I believe you can do it, Kituk! I really do! I'll help you pick your dog team and train

them, and I'll go to Nome when the time comes and see you through. Shake on it!"

Kituk put out his hand solemnly. He did not understand this shaking hands among the white men, but he felt it was some very solemn way of wishing luck and driving away taboo, so it was with a strong heart that he tossed the blanket from him and raced away, light as a white rabbit, to his own home, there to sit by the seal-oil lamp and think of the race which was to be entered when the dark cold winter came again.

CHAPTER II

THE ALL-ALASKA SWEEPSTAKE

"YOU'RE entered." Thompson handed Kituk a slip of paper. It was the entrance card to the great race. It had cost him a pretty piece of money, this entrance of Kituk's dog team, but if he won, — and he would win, — the grateful Eskimo boy would gladly pay it back, and if not, Kituk should never know.

Kituk thanked the government man, then looked proudly at the team before him. They were all gray wolfhounds, brought at one time or another from the Siberian side of Bering Straits. They had been carefully selected, and only their driver and the young government man knew how they could run and how they could endure.

"I am only afraid of Capseta," whispered the Eskimo boy. Capseta was his old and beloved leader. Never was there such a leader on the trail before. He could follow a trail wind-blown and days old to a cabin far from the main traveled road and always without fail.

"Never fear," said the white man, "He has never failed you yet."

The Eskimo boy smiled cheerfully. He knew dogs.

There was a little cheer as Kituk, whose team was the second to start, took his place. The teams were started at intervals of one hour, and the time was figured for the hours spent on the trail. In fifteen minutes Kituk would be off. Already Pete Milard, the trader, who turned racer in winter, was on his way before him.

The government man stood back in the crowd and watched his prodigy proudly. He would win! He would! He was sure of that. No racer was so strong and no team so enduring on the trail. All the

other men were white men, and though trained down to the last ounce, they did not have the iron endurance of an Eskimo, and their dogs, bloodhounds and bird dogs and others of the white man's kind, could never stand against Kituk's hardy fellows who were but a few generations from a wolf.

This All-Alaska Sweepstake was the great event of the season. For months and months the frozen ocean had been silent, buried beneath the glimmering ice. For months the mail had come and gone by dog team eighteen hundred miles. All the amusements of the year had gone stale. But the great dog race! All the talk had centered about that for weeks, months; and now here it was, and here was the great throng of the mining city with hundreds who had come miles to see it. They waited, fur-clad, backs to the wind, in silence. They would watch the start, and then huddle about reporting stations to await the returns. And

here was Kituk and his gray team, not so many dogs as the others, and not nearly so much man, so far as size goes, but they somehow realized that he was going to count.

A loud round of cheers went up as the words rang out, "Ready! Go!" followed by a pistol shot. Kituk was away! From Nome to Candle and return is four hundred miles as the crow flies. It is farther by the trail. Along the coast for a few miles, then up windy Solomon River, then over chain after chain of hills, and then down Kiwalib River, the long trail wound through many a sharp ravine and wind-blown draw. And this was the trail Kituk was to travel. He must not rest unless his dogs demanded it. The government man shivered a bit as he thought of it, then smiled as the Eskimo boy threw back his parka hood and laughed at the gale that fanned his cheek as he swung into the trail.

There are few things in the world more wonderful than a perfect, wind-packed

trail and a trusty dog team spinning on before one, on into the great white silence beyond. To Kituk there was but one thing more wonderful that day; the wonder of wonders, that he, an Eskimo boy, was in the great race. Before him the team, a gray streak, sped away. His hands lightly touched the sled. His feet made soft pitpats on the trail. His sled was empty; no food, no sleeping-bag. Who dared not brave the worst that that cold land had to offer? Not he! He laughed aloud at thought of blizzard and wild drifting trails as he whistled to his leader and caught the swing of a turn in the trail. This was life for him! Had there been only the trail and the dogs, it would have been enough, but with the prize ahead, — his heart near burst with joy!

But it's the back trail that's the testing time. Then dogs and men, tasked to the uttermost, strain every muscle with dull eyes still riveted to the trail. Kituk had

made it safely to the top of the first low rows of hills. His eyes were still shining, though a driving snow told of a blizzard which would be in full progress by the time he had reached Solomon River, twenty miles from his goal. Again he laughed at the storm as he drew the string tight about his parka collar. Again he whistled cheerily to his leader. But after the whistle there came a worried sigh. Capseta, the brave, trusted, dauntless leader, the faithfulest friend he had ever known, showed signs of exhaustion. Every now and again he turned his head to look back at his master, as if for assurance. He had never done that before. And now his shoulders were drooping a trifle. He was not getting the full swing of his body that made travel easy. Kituk spoke to him encouragingly.

He paused at a roadhouse for only a moment's rest. He was assured by the keeper that he was easily half an hour in the lead of Scotty Allen, a veteran racer,

while Pete Milard was close third. He breathed more easily. There would be an opportunity to rest now and then, if need be, and still win.

As he rounded the last roadhouse a staggering blast struck across his trail. The blizzard had arrived! Solomon River, too! There was no wilder river in a storm than Solomon. Kituk's brow wrinkled again. The old leader looked back at his master for a second, then plunged into the storm. But brave as he might be, the old punch was not there. The traces slackened again and again, as he drew himself together for a new rush at the blinding storm which whirled and eddied about this little ship of the Arctic wilderness, like a heavy sea about a fishing smack.

"Whoa!" The team stopped. They were still fifteen miles from their destination, which was worse than thirty in this storm. "It's no use," the boy almost sobbed, "He can't make it."

He ran ahead and cut the traces. Shamed at his weakness, the old leader slunk from his place and fell behind the sled, while the next dog took the lead. For a time Capseta kept the pace in the rear of the sled, but more and more he lagged behind. Again and again Kituk whistled to him and shouted words of encouragement. Again and again he spurted ahead, only to fall behind farther than before. At last he fell and lay prone in the snow, while the sled forged on into the milky whiteness of whirling storm. At last the boy turned and looked back. The old dog was not to be seen. There was but a moment's hesitation. Could he leave him? Others might; he could not. In a second he was spinning back over the trail. Tenderly he picked up the old friend, who looked up at him and seemed to say, "Let me go; I'm no good, anyway." But in another moment the dog was riding on the sled, his red tongue hanging out in appreciation. Even with

this added load there was still a chance. Kituk redoubled his own energies and pushed his team to the utmost. But the extra load told on them. Still there was a chance. "A chance!" he kept saying to himself, and visions of that trading schooner, painted red and white, with sky-reaching mast and billowing sails, drifted before his eyes and turned the wild storm to a mildly rippling sea.

But what was this? His dogs whirled from the trail for a moment. Then — "Whoa"! He stopped the sled, just before the runners struck an object huddled there in the snow. He ran ahead and touched it with his toe. It was a dog; one of Pete Milard's dogs. It had played out and had been left to perish in the snow.

"Pete, the brute!" the boy said savagely; then he thought of his own hesitation a half hour before and hung his head. Perhaps this dog meant nothing to Pete. Capseta meant much to him. But after all, it was a dog, man's best friend

in that frozen land, and the thought that one should be left there to perish after his life's best energies had been spent to aid his master was sickening to him.

Slowly he turned the sled to one side and passed on. But the vision of the dog huddled in the snow did not leave him. There was an after image. He had scarcely gone five rods when he stopped the team.

Only for a moment he hesitated. "Ah-ne-ca! What's the matter with me!" he exclaimed irritably. "It's not my dog! It's not my fault that he freezes! And without him I can win. With him I can't." He spoke to the dogs, but this time he did not allow them to start. He dug his heels into the snow, while a revulsion of the whole plan of races and white man's ideas which helped him to forget his ideals and his best friends came over him, and turning, he walked deliberately back to the freezing dog. Picking him up as tenderly as though he had been

old Capseta, he carried him to the sled. The race was lost. With the two dogs on the sled, his team made slow progress, but at last he appeared ploddingly around a corner in view of the throng, who with collars turned high to shelter them from the storm, waited the finish of the racers.

"He's lost," said the young government man, looking at his watch, "and he was so far ahead at the last roadhouse!"

"You can't trust a native," sneered the man next to him.

"But he's carrying something on his sled; it's a dog — two of them!" exclaimed Thompson, a moment later.

"Trust a native for that," said the other man. "They'd lose a race to save a dog any time. That's all they know about things."

Thompson moved away from the other man. He was beginning to understand. And when the boy came laboring up to him, he understood fully, and as he put his arm across the boy's shoulder, he

whispered, "Kituk, no matter what others say, I'm proud of you. More proud than if you had won the race. We'll get that schooner some other way."

At the Log Cabin Club that night there was a great celebration. Just when it was at its highest a tall man, of dignified bearing, entered the room. By his side walked a shy Eskimo boy. Every one was silent for a second. The man was the richest miner in Nome. He strode forward toward the front of the great table that ran the length of the room. Lightly picking the Eskimo boy up, he stood him on the table.

"Boys," he said in a husky voice, "three cheers for the fellow who dared to lose a race to save another man's dog. Make it a good one." And it was a good one. Those log rafters had never rung with such cheers before.

Some one sprang up in the back of the room. "I move that hereafter every man who enters the race be required to bring

all his dogs home or forfeit the race." There were a dozen seconds, and the motion was carried.

"And here's for the Eskimo kid," shouted a rough miner, doffing his cap, and starting the rounds of the room. Bewildered Kituk heard the clink, clink of gold, as it fell into the cap. More bewildered than ever, he saw the man pour the money into a rough moose-hide sack, and thrust it into his hand. Then there was another round of cheers for the game little racer, and he felt himself once more out in the fresh night air. The government man was beside him.

"What did they mean?" Kituk asked hesitatingly.

"They gave you the money because you taught them a lesson in kindness that they won't forget," said Thompson, clearing his throat.

"Will there be enough to buy a schooner?" Kituk asked.

"Not enough for that," the teacher

said in a kindly tone, "but enough to make a start. You put that in the bank and see if we don't find a way to get the rest of it!"

Kituk felt something touch his leg. It was the nose of Capseta. He reached down and patted the shaggy head of the faithful old leader and was glad.

CHAPTER III

A CARIBOU FARM

Down at the sand spit at Nome a few Eskimo people have built their homes, and here they live the year around, dickering with the white man and doing little odd jobs about the city for their living. One of these was Kituk's Uncle Kitmesuk. And now Kituk lay on a deerskin by the fire, while the old uncle spun one of his wonderful yarns of other days, when Cape Nome was but a place for Eskimo people to drag their skin boats upon, during their journeys to and from the mouth of the great Yukon.

It was early autumn, though the snow lay thick on the ground. Kituk and the government man had driven a few fat reindeer down to the city to sell to the

miners, and he was now resting before the return trip.

"Ah-ne-ca! Ubagok!" The old uncle always began his stories so, and Kituk propped himself up on his elbow to listen. New or old, his uncle's stories were always good.

"Ah-ne-ca! Ubagok! Long, long ago, when I was a young man, a boy like Kituk, we did not bring reindeer to Sitnezomie to sell, as Kituk and the Alongmeet do. We found wild caribou and we trapped them."

Trapped caribou? Kituk sat up all alert for the story. He had not heard this one before.

"Unilati River this side; little river, this one. There is a high cliff and plenty of willows and fir trees. There come the caribou. Oh! plenty, *plenty* caribou! Many as the herds of walrus in the springtime. Come one snow, come two times snow, then come caribou back to the warm land.

"When they come we make traps, like the white man's place for the horse and cow. Come plenty caribou. Great clubs; kill 'em caribou. Plenty 'cow cow.' Plenty meat find Eskimo. Caribou. Unilati River this side."

The story was ended. It was a simple enough story from a simple old man. But Kituk knew it was true. Kitmesuk's stories were always true.

Something seemed to be stirring in Kituk's mind. An idea which suddenly burst out full-bloom. He was away in an instant to tell it to Thompson, the government man.

Long and enthusiastically he talked, unfolding the plan which had but so lately blossomed out in his sunshiny little soul.

"And we wouldn't kill them! We wouldn't kill them!" he said excitedly. "We'd keep them and have a caribou farm. And when they were tame enough, we'd sell them to the white men, and we'd have our schooner, and it would have

white sides with red trimmings, and masts long and slim, and sails of real canvas. Ki-ai-yi-yum-yah-yah!" He began to sing his Eskimo song in his excitement.

"I believe you might do it." The government man spoke slowly. "You might have to go farther than your uncle used to, for the caribou are scarcer these days, but they still go south, and there is yet time to get there and build the corral. Quite likely there is some deserted mining camp close enough to furnish some of the building material — but —" He paused for reflection, "Do you realize what selling a herd of tame caribou to a white man would mean to your people?"

Kituk looked bewildered, but did not answer.

"Do you know of a white man who owns a reindeer herd?" Thompson asked.

"No," Kituk answered, still bewildered.

"Well," said the government man. "The government has not thought it safe

to allow the Eskimo people to sell their reindeer to the white man. If it were you, it would be all right; that is, if all your people were as careful and thoughtful as you, but you know there are many, many of your people who would trade their last deer for some pretty bauble, and then when spring came they would be starving. We hope that the time will come when there will be no more hunger, for there will be reindeer for all; but that time may never come if unscrupulous white men come into possession of herds of reindeer and domesticated caribou."

Kituk went home very thoughtful. His scheme had seemed such a good one, and he was so hopeful of gaining his schooner in this way, but he saw now that to win one point for his people and to lose another was worse than useless.

But the government man was hardly out of bed next morning when the boy came bounding into his room, his face shining. "The government will buy

them! The government will buy them!" he shouted.

Thompson rubbed his head thoughtfully for a moment. "Oh, yes, the caribou," he said. "Is that so? Tell me about it."

Kituk told him in a few words how he had gone to the great government chief who was then in Nome, and how the chief had promised to buy the caribou if they could be caught and tamed. When he had finished, Thompson remembered having heard the chief say only a few days before that if they could secure some native caribou to mix with the herds, it would make a healthier and more vigorous stock.

"I believe I'll go with you," said Thompson; "it'll be a grand outing."

Kituk was silent in his gratitude.

"Yes," said the teacher, after another moment's thought, "I'll go. The chief can send Zook up to take care of my work at the Cape while I am gone. His school-

house burned down, and he is doing nothing at present, anyway."

Two days later, with three well-laden reindeer sleds, the Eskimo and his teacher swung out in the trail once traveled by the racers, and headed toward some point miles and miles away, where the caribou were said to still pass on their southward journey.

Kituk lifted the battered field glasses to his eyes and anxiously swept the horizon. Every morning for the last ten days he and the teacher had climbed to the summit of this hill and scanned the horizon for some signs of the approaching caribou. They had seen, instead, the broad sweep of whiteness in the foreground, an occasional dotting of black-willow bushes standing out against the sheet of white, and far in the distance, row on row, the great white mountains smoking with snow, but no caribou. No caribou!

Each day Kituk's face had grown a

little graver. Each day he climbed with more anxious step to the summit. Everything was in readiness; the trap built on the side of a rocky cliff among scrub willows and all covered over with brush was set. Their rough cabin, hid away in the distance, was prepared for a winter's comfort. All was ready. Would they come?

Suddenly the boy's face lightened. All he said was, "Ah-ne-ca!" as he handed the glasses to his friend. Carefully he pointed out the direction and waited. The government man studied the distant hills for what seemed a long time to the impatient boy. Then he said, "They're coming!"

And they were coming! Swift as the wind, a great herd of caribou were sweeping down the river valley. Not so great a herd as in days of old, but great enough to wreck their little corral and go sweeping uncaptured to their southern home. They had not thought of this possibility. Now there was but one chance. A narrower

valley split off to the right, half a mile from the spot of their corral. Should part of the herd branch off at this point, they might retain the remainder.

They were coming. Now they could hear the snap of hoof on hoof and the clash of antler on antler. It was a sight never to be forgotten, a thousand splendid creatures bearing down before the wind, silent save for the clash of hoof and horn. The hearts of the waiters beat high. Could they divide them? There was one lone dog with them, but he was a collie, useful to deer herders as to sheep men. But these wild brown creatures of the hills and the tundra! Could they be directed? Would they divide, or would they plunge on and destroy all? Now Kituk saw a white schooner with red trimming, reaching masts, and bellying sails float before his vision, and now he saw it fading in the distance, while he waited with impatient half-dread the oncoming of the caribou.

Now they could hear the grating breath of the bull leader, and could see the caribou dip their great antlered heads to scoop up a mouthful of snow as they ran.

Now they had entered the draw. And "Now!" whispered the teacher. Like three demons the men and the dog charged toward the passing herd. There was a tremendous clash, clash of antlers, caribou piled on caribou for an instant, then there was a mad rush up the opposite steep bank. The herd divided, plunged on; the smaller portion into the corral, the larger up the steep bank and away on the other side.

In a moment more, before the great leaders discovered they were trapped and rushed back on their trail, the men had quickly closed the gap and piled it high with willow brush till no opening showed, and the caribou rushed wildly in a circle, now and then trying the willow wall with their antlers, but all to no avail.

For a moment an unhappy feeling came

over the Eskimo boy at thought of trapping a wild thing. But he soon realized that ere many months they would be free again, roaming the tundra with thousands of their own kind, the reindeer, and he turned to his teacher with a glad smile.

"Next spring," he said, "we will have the schooner."

That night, after a frugal meal of baked beans and sour-dough bread, Kituk sat beside the glowing Yukon stove with one elbow on the table, thinking, and in his mind once more came the schooner with its masts and sails. He heard the whistle scream as he pulled the string, and the bell clang as he pressed the button with his foot. He felt the twist of the restless wheel as he headed her landward before his own native village; heard the glad "Who-hoop, who-a-hoop!" of the native canoe men as they pulled alongside. He smiled as they called him Captain Kituk.

But then the vision changed, and he saw before him the months of tireless toil

which he and his teacher must endure before the goal was won. There was the moving of the portable corral every day that the caribou might have moss, no mean task in itself. There was the bringing of trained reindeer to assist in the work of taming. There would be blizzards when the snow must be kept from building trestles over the corral to free the wild captives. There would be wild, prowling wolves. Oh, yes, there would be battles royal with darkness and storm and the beasts of the Arctic wilds.

But again the vision changed, and he sat among his people as he had before, in the hard and cruel springtime. No food in the cachés, no fish beneath the shore ice, no seal in the sea, no great white bear prowling about on the ice floe, no walrus coming from the south, no white man's food, nothing but hunger and the wailing of the starved dogs. Once more the hunger gripped him. Once more his cheeks grew thin, and he saw the

pinched faces of little children. Then he was back at the corral fighting with weather and storm and darkness and wild beasts, and his blood tingled as it coursed through his veins. They would win! This time they would! Involuntarily his hands clenched as he stared into space, and his face, set like a bronze statue, reflected the thoughts that burned themselves upon his brain. The teacher saw and smiled.

"Yes, Kituk," he said, a new note of kindness in his voice. "Yes, my boy, this time we will win."

For a long time they sat in silence, each busy with his own thoughts. At last the government man spoke. "There's a schooner on the beach at Port Clarence. She's the *Sea Wolf*," he said meditatively. "I shouldn't wonder a bit if she could be bought."

"Is she painted red and white?" Kituk asked eagerly.

Thompson threw back his shoulders and

laughed a good long honest laugh. "No," he said at last. "She's all white now, but a bit of red paint doesn't cost much. It's the workmanship of her hull that counts. She's built by a master, and her keel is of ironwood. They say the ice can't break her."

Kituk knew little of white men's ships beyond the steering of them, and he was thankful that he had so wise a friend and companion.

"And I shouldn't wonder if the West Coast Trading Company had overstocked with provisions this year," said Thompson, "and if they have, and we can clear from Port Clarence, we will have half a day's start of any schooner on the coast. Well, to-morrow it's work for us, so let's turn in." He began untying his "mukluk" [1] strings, and they were soon sleeping peacefully within their cabin while the Great Dipper circled about in the northern sky and the North Star shone directly overhead.

[1] Sealskin boot.

CHAPTER IV

LAUNCHING OF THE *SEA WOLF*

"THAT'S her, over beyond the wharf." Thompson shoved back the hood of his parka and drew in a long breath, as he and his companion mounted the last low hill between Gold Run and Port Clarence.

With wildly beating heart and glowing cheeks, the Eskimo boy shaded his eyes and looked away for a first glimpse of the schooner which was already his.

The hard, long winter with its freezings and darkness, with its struggle with wolves and wolverines, with its sleepless nights and wind-blown days, were all over. The caribou were now in the government's herd and part of the money safely in the hands of the former owner of the schooner, while

the remainder had been invested in a goodly supply of trading stock which, true to Thompson's prophecy, was still in store at Port Clarence. There remained but the task of overhauling the schooner and getting her to the mouth of the bay, ready for the break-up of the vast ice floe which now crowded the ocean. But this was to be no small task, and Kituk once more tightened the string to his parka and whistled to his dog team, as they plunged down the last hill and into the village which lay beyond.

Then followed happy days of scrubbing, painting, rerigging, testing out the engine, the thousand and one things that must be done to a schooner which has braved a winter in the Arctic open. But it was such glad work, and so cheerfully done, that there was danger that neither Kituk nor his teacher would be fit for the sailing when that great day came.

At last she was all rigged and ready, and you may well guess the white hull was

trimmed with a rim of red, while the mast displayed alternating stripes of red and blue to the first cross-arm. Oh! she was a trim little vessel, you may be sure.

But when the time came when she must be hauled to the mouth of the bay, some two miles away, this was a serious moment indeed. All the Eskimos of the village were on hand to push with a will, and with them were all their dog teams, ready to pull their last pound. But when every ounce of strength was thrown upon the dead weight of the schooner, she moved but a yard or two, and the strength so hard to expend evenly was exhausted. The dogs slipped, slid, and howled, while the Eskimos, puffing and panting, paused to rest. The partners suddenly realized that there was more to a white man's schooner than they had counted upon, and unless help came from some unknown quarter, their schooner would still be in Port Clarence when Pete Milard went tooting up the coast in the clear water

of the ocean channel, which opened up much sooner than did the frozen bay.

Panting, the Eskimo boy and his teacher sat on an ice bowlder and thought. But think as they might, they could find no way. There was not another ounce of power in the village and no tackle to give their power greater advantage. To attempt to do the thing as it stood would mean only death to their dogs and nothing gained.

As they sat thus by the stubborn schooner, some one shouted "Tomai! Tomai!" which is the call for arriving strangers. Looking up, the boys saw a splendid dog team come over the rise above the Port. Behind it trotted a stalwart form dressed in splendid furs. Thompson recognized at once the man who had stood Kituk on the table and proposed three cheers for him on that eventful night after the great race. His heart bounded. Perhaps here was aid. The dog team? No, that was not help

enough. But here was the richest, most powerful man in all Alaska. Why should he not be able to help in some way? The teacher dared hope he might.

The sled was soon alongside. The great man shook hands warmly with the teacher, patted Kituk on the head, and shouted "Hello!" to the rest of the natives.

"What are you trying to do here?" he asked in his gruff way.

Thompson told him in a few words their aim and their plan.

"Well, I should say you ought to succeed!" The great man spoke warmly. "Pete Milard is a thief, a petty larceny thief! Nothing less than that! Know what he did last summer, when I sent eggs and potatoes to my men at Tin City? Took the two lower layers out of the case of eggs and the center out of the crate of potatoes! That's what he did! He's a petty larceny thief! That's what he is! If you boys get afloat, you can haul my freight, all of it, see? I'd trust that

Eskimo boy with my life. If a dog's life is worth a lot to him, more'n money, then I'd trust him with anything. See?"

There was a shout from the office of the Trading Company.

"Guess it's a telephone call for me," the great man explained. "You come along with me, and I'll see what I can do for you in a minute."

Kituk followed Thompson and the great man to the office of the Trading Company. He had high hopes of aid from this man who did everything he wished because he had money to do it with. And if he did not help? Kituk's heart sank. Pete Milard would reap again his ripe harvest of graft from the Eskimo people, who did not know that Kituk had the schooner and was coming. There was no way to let them know, for in places the trail was already overflooded and dangerous. One day late would be as bad as a month, for already Pete would have robbed one village and gone on to the next.

"Hello! Hello! Who's that you say?" The great man was at the telephone. "Pete Milard? Oh! Yes, what is it? What? Horses at Gold Run? Yes, I got two teams there. What? Want them down at Sinrock River to pull your schooner off! Wait a minute. Can you have them? Let me think."

Kituk heard the words. His heart sank. If Pete secured the horses, it would mean defeat to him and to his teacher and to his people.

"No! No!" the great man sputtered, as if a sudden thought had come to him. "You can't have them. Of course you can't. I've got business for those horses. Important business. No! No! Don't make any difference! No! I say No!" He hung up the receiver.

"Now I tell you," he said, smiling calmly and speaking in a tone of voice that he might have used in ordering his steak browned for supper, "I'll tell you what you boys want. It's a team or two

of horses, a team or two of horses! I've got two good teams down at Gold Run. Not doing a thing in the world! Not a thing! Just rusting in the harness. That's what they are. I'll have the boys bring them over in the morning. See?"

"But — but —" Thompson stammered, "I thought you said you had important work for them?"

"Sure! Sure!" the other smiled. "Ain't that important business, getting that schooner of yours out to water? If it ain't, what is?" He laughed a great, strong, good man's laugh, and went into the hotel. "They'll be here in the morning," he shouted back over his shoulder.

And they were. And with the great strong horses in the harness and with many a glad "Who-hoop! Who-a-hoop!" from the natives, the schooner went crashing away over the ice to the very brink of the dark waters. And when, two weeks later, the ice floe cleared away, she settled

gracefully into the salt sea, as trim a ship as ever Eskimo boy dreamed of.

"No, you can't pay me." The great man laughed, as Thompson came to him after the vessel was afloat. "You can't pay me. That boy of yours paid me more than a year ago when he brought in another man's dog and lost his race. Just by the way, Scottie Allen was driving my team when he won the race. Scottie won fair. He brought in all his dogs, but he didn't bring in anybody else's, so I figure your boy has some of that prize money coming still, and if he needs any of it, send him round. And remember, you haul all my freight. All of it!"

He shook the teacher's hand, and shouting to his dogs hurried on up the beach toward Tin City. He hoped to touch this point and return before the shore ice broke up and destroyed the trail.

CHAPTER V

CAUGHT IN THE ICE PACK

When a schooner of the Arctic, newly painted and rerigged, escapes from the nine long months of ice-locked solitude, she cuts the water as gleefully as some living thing. And the *Sea Wolf*, with Kituk at the wheel, sprang forward in the icy water that first day of June as keenly as the nightingale cuts the dark air as she shrills her spring song.

There was joy in every breeze. The schooner, laden to the port with things the Eskimos most need, responded to the least touch of her young captain's hand, while the teacher stood aloft and took in the fresh air of spring and watched the white ice shore of Port Clarence fade from sight as they entered more and more into the dark waters of Bering Straits.

Here and there a daring little sea parrot dipped into the icy waters or went skimming along over the surface toward his summer home on the Diomede Islands. Here and there, too, a dark seal rose to the surface, only to drop suddenly from sight at sound of the pop! pop! of the gasoline engine. It was a great day for the two young adventurers. It had been a great year for the young teacher; a great year in the open, with plenty of rough work and many a wild adventure. He was returning to his work at the Cape with renewed strength, interest, and courage. And as for the Eskimo boy, was it not enough that his dearest dream was realized, the owning of a boat and the privilege of regaining the lost estate of his once renowned family, and more than all that of helping his people? What wonder then that they sang at their tasks, as the little schooner cut the waters by Cape York and the mouth of Lost River, bound for Bering Straits and the Arctic.

But there is many a day of sunshine that ends with a night of storm. They had hardly reached Cape York when an offshore wind began to roughen the waters into a promised gale. They did not fear the storm, for, calked to the deck, the little schooner could weather any gale. But the shore ice! Two miles of it had been melting and rotting for a month now, and a day of wind might shake it loose from its mooring and shut them securely out from their goal.

Anxiously they waited the drift of the wind. The current was strong, and they could make little progress against it. This would change, but would it be too late?

Suddenly, Kituk seized the old field glasses. Anxiously he scanned the shore. "See!" he exclaimed, thrusting the glasses into the hand of his partner. Thompson looked. Close to the shore appeared a broad, black crack which told plainer than words that the great mass was moving slowly out to sea.

"We must get around it!" exclaimed Thompson, jumping to the engine and setting her at full speed. "If we can get just ahead of it, we can put in at Cape Prince of Wales and do our trading while it passes."

Chug, chug, went the engine. Gleefully through the water shot the schooner. They were gaining inch by inch, yard by yard, mile by mile! Thompson figured for a moment on a piece of paper, then settled down contentedly.

"Ah, well!" he sighed, "It's all right, Kituk. We'll make it by nearly an hour, if nothing goes wrong."

Kituk grinned as he turned the wheel this way, then that, and dreamed of the happy "Ah-ne-cas" and "Matnas" of his people as they saw him, a native boy of their own village, the proud owner of a white man's gasoline schooner, and the glad "Ill-e-can-e-muks!" when they realized that he was truly going to trade honestly and not take the slightest advantage of their necessities.

But suddenly something caught his eye. Quickly he seized the glasses and looked away toward the shoreward side of the great mass of ice, which was now some rods out to sea. He uttered a groan and passed the glass to his companion.

"Some fool white man!" Thompson exclaimed. Close to the shore side, seeking in vain for some passage to the land, was a lone man driving a dog team. Kituk knew that "some fool white man" was right, for no Eskimo would attempt to travel along the shore ice at this dangerous time of the year.

Only one thing could be done. The man had not sighted them, so low lay their vessel to the water. Thompson jumped to the whistle cord, and blew three long blasts. The man looked up. At last he caught sight of their masts. Then, wildly waving his arms, he turned his dogs toward the schooner. It was a slow task picking a passage over the honeycombed ice to the schooner two miles

away. Twice the stranger was faced by a yawning chasm of black water and was obliged to make a detour to find a safe passage. Thompson studied his watch for half an hour, then closed it with a snap and a groan. "It's all over now," he sighed. "We can't beat it now, and if Pete gets the inside of it we lose."

His sorrow and that of his companion was somewhat abated when five moments later they recognized the team and the man they were waiting to rescue. It was their friend, the great man of Nome! He had gone to his plant at Tin City and, attempting to return, had been carried out to sea.

"You've saved my life; I couldn't swim a stroke!" he thundered cordially, as he tumbled on board, followed by his dogs, "and I've lost you your chance. It's too damn bad! What fools we white men are!" he said, suddenly sobered at realizing the plight in which he had put his young friends.

"Oh, that's all right," said Thompson, with a smile. "We'll find a way. We always have, haven't we, Kituk?"

Kituk smiled and returned to his wheel.

"Yes, there must be a way," said the great man, looking off at the ice floe. "When it reaches the Straits, probably it will break up with the turn, and you can dodge through."

For three hours they sat silently watching the ice as it opened and split here and there, or was broken by the waves. The sun was shining day and night now, and no one thought of sleep. At last Thompson fried eggs and some fresh smelt, and they ate a hearty meal.

"See!" exclaimed the great man, as they came back on deck. "There's a passage all the way through to the shore."

It was true there was a passage, but both Thompson and Kituk hesitated to answer.

"Why don't you try it?" asked the rich man.

Then, their fears overcome by his con-

fidence, they headed the schooner toward the mouth of the channel, and setting the engine at full speed, shot into the narrow passage. As far as the center of the floe they went in safety. Kituk suddenly rang the bell signal for slow, and in a moment more the engine was dead. They were silently surrounded by giant ice cakes, which closed in on all sides like some police posse about a captive.

"Well," said the magnate, looking helplessly about. "Well, I guess I've done you all the damage I can. I'm going to bed! I don't know much about ships, but if you need me don't hesitate to call me. Good night."

The boys smiled at his good humor and prepared to take turns at the watch.

By the third watch of the night they were well within the Straits. The offshore wind had driven the floe over toward the Little Diomede Island, and already they could hear the cakes bumping on its rocky shore.

"Going to be bad," said Kituk, as Thompson relieved him. "Shall I stay on deck?"

"No, I'll call you if you are needed," said the teacher, wrinkling his brow.

It did look bad indeed. The Little Diomede is scarcely more than a granite bowlder jutting out of the sea. The ice floe was crowded hard against it, and already the cakes were gliding upon one another and crumbling down in piles with dismal grinding falls. Thompson was to learn more about ice floes in that three hours of watch than ever before in his life. The giant cakes and ice slabs, some of them rods square and six or eight feet thick, rose high in air and, buckling, tumbled headlong, burying what was before them tons deep beneath. Should one of these rise above the *Sea Wolf*, nothing could save her. Scarcely would the men escape with their lives. Perhaps not that, for it was far to the granite bowlder, where ascent might prove impossible.

Slowly the midnight sun rose from its resting place on the crest of the sea, and it looked as though morning was coming at midnight. Slowly the floe drifted, drifted with the current toward the North Pole. Anxiously Thompson watched the great cake of ice which lay between them and disaster. Others piled upon it, but like a thing set there as guard, it held firm, neither buckling nor shifting from its place. At last, just as he heard Kituk begin to move below, he felt the floe ease away. The grinding sound ceased, and he knew that they were drifting into the Arctic Sea.

"Where are we?" The magnate poked his head from the forecastle and greeted the teacher.

"Somewhere in the Arctic, thank God," Thompson said fervently.

"We've a right to be thankful," said the other.

Three hours later, after they had eaten breakfast, the magnate seized a pike pole

from the deck, and leaping over the gunwale, began to pole the ice from the prow of the schooner. The ice, once in the broad ocean, was spreading out. Seeing his good work, the others joined him, and soon each, coat off, sweating and puffing, was busy doing his best to free the schooner. Once free from the floe, they might hope to make their way back to Cape Prince of Wales. And in due time they were out in the open sea and pop, popping back to the home Thompson and his Kituk had left months before.

"You do the trading," said the magnate. "I'm going to get some more sleep. I can't get back to Nome now, and I'm going the rounds with you."

I don't need to tell you of the greeting the boy mariner received in his native town. Pete Milard had not arrived. No schooner had ever reached the Cape so soon, and the welcome and the gratitude were all that Captain Kituk had hoped,

and very much more. Wild and long were the shouts, as, at last, with a bountiful cargo still left, they sailed away for Point Hope and other needy points on the Arctic mainland.

CHAPTER VI

THE STEATITE LAMP

In one corner of the "inni", taking advantage of the square of light that fell from the transom-like opening in the roof, an aged Eskimo woman sat sewing at a new "mukluk." Her husband, the old Kitmesuk, was an industrious hunter. He traveled far and wide in search of the seal, the white fox, and the great white bear. His mukluk soles were soon worn through. Old Kitmesuk himself was sitting by the seal-oil lamp, mending his sealskin net, which was to be set on the sand bar in the springtime to catch the darting salmon. Thompson, the government teacher, was curled up in the corner, dreamily watching them. He enjoyed these visits to the homes of his Eskimo

people. There was something so snug and busy about them that they reminded him of his boyhood days on a New England farm. There, he remembered, he had sat by the hour near the fire while his grandmother knit at a stocking, and his grandfather fussed away at this thing or that.

Half thoughtlessly the government man drew his knife from his pocket and, finding nothing to whittle, began scraping the hard-caked seal oil from the lamp which burned by his side. The bowl-like lamp, swimming with seal oil, gave forth a sputtering blaze along its edge and seemed to scold at him as he worked.

Suddenly he sat up straight with a low exclamation. He had cut through the caked oil and had come to the surface beneath. It was not what he had expected it to be, a mere thing of clay. It was a genuine steatite lamp!

Without further revealing his discovery, he began speculating on the history of this

rare vessel. These lamps had practically disappeared from the Arctic mainland, having been gathered up by traders and miners for museums and private collections. Where had they come from in the first place? Who knew?

"Capsinie?" (How much?) he said to Kitmesuk, pointing to the seal-oil lamp.

The old man showed all his white teeth in a grin, and exploded into a great string of Eskimo dialect, of which Thompson could catch only "Wunga pezukpeet", which means "I want"; but what it was the old man wanted he was unable to tell.

Fortunately at this moment a head was thrust in at the entrance of the inni and a cheerful voice shouted "Hello!" It was Kituk, "Captain Kituk", as people had come to call him since his fortunate venture in caribou the summer before, which had won him the sole ownership of the good schooner *Sea Wolf*.

Thompson told the boy what he had been trying to ask Kitmesuk, and after

talking a long time to the old man in his own language, Kituk turned again to the teacher.

"He says he won't sell," said the boy, smiling. "He says he has had it a long time and he will sell anything, his fox skins, his beaver skins, anything, but not this seal-oil lamp."

Thompson was disappointed. He had wished to own one of these rare old lamps. Not that they were any great objects of beauty, being merely a semi-circular trough for holding seal oil, very rudely hollowed out of a certain type of rock, but the antiquity of the things and the mystery of their origin was what gave them their added interest and value.

"Kituk," he said at last, "where do you think they came from?"

"I don't know," said the boy simply.

The lamp was soon forgotten, and ere long the teacher, pulling his parka hood over his ears, crept out at the low opening and made his way home.

The Eskimo boy remained. That question, "Where do you think they came from?" had stuck in his mind.

For a long time the boy sat and gazed at the strange seal-oil lamp with its mysterious past. Where had it come from? He had been far along the Arctic coast. Had it been made at any of the points he had visited? It seemed hardly possible, for then there would be plenty of them, and men would be making them still. But then, they may have been made by a village which had later been wiped out by pestilence or by famine. As he thought of this, Kituk imagined himself finding that mine and manufacturing new seal-oil lamps for his people. But this did not satisfy his imagination. Perhaps it had been made on the Russian side of the Arctic and carried across the Strait as trade goods by the Chukches. He suddenly turned to the old Kitmesuk.

"Kitmesuk, where was your seal-oil lamp made?"

The old man jerked his thumb toward the north and muttered "Ubagok," as he went on with his net mending.

Kituk leaned forward eagerly. He was then to find out after all. His old uncle knew.

"Where? Where? Kitmesuk, where?" he demanded eagerly.

"Canok-timana!" (I don't know) exclaimed the old man; "long way, long way —"

Kituk questioned him, naming place after place, Point Hope, Cape Espenburg, Point Barrow, Mouth of the Mackenzie, to all of which the old man shook his head. He was not quite sure about Mouth of the Mackenzie, but at last shook his head at that too. He only knew that years before these strange lamps had been traded from village to village till they had at last reached Cape Prince of Wales. Where they had come from, other than that they came from the far north coast of the Arctic, he could not say.

Kituk was disappointed; he had hoped that from his uncle he was to get the history of these strange seal-oil lamps. He wandered from inni to inni of the village, questioning other old men, but always it was the same story, the jerking of the thumb toward the north and the indefinite "somewhere far north" that met his question and left him as uninformed as before.

It was midwinter, and the young Captain, who was so very busy in the short summer time, was occupied only with occasional trips up the coast with trade goods on a dog sled, and with seal hunting and white bear hunting on the dangerous ice floe, so there was plenty of spare time for the study of this puzzling problem which had come to him. But one day something occurred which promised to throw some light on the question, or at least to offer a possible solution: Evans, the superintendent of the Northwest Division of Native Education in Alaska, had returned from his annual trip to the far

northern points, — Cape Espenburg, Point Barrow, and others. Kituk chanced to be at the government man's house when he brought in his pack and displayed its contents.

A man who travels far in the Arctic is constantly picking up curious and interesting articles along his way, — a rare fox skin, some expertly carved ivory, a beautiful mat of eider-duck skins, a gold nugget or two, — always something which makes his pack as interesting to the home he visits as were the peddlers' packs to the children of a country home in days gone by.

So Kituk was eagerly but modestly curious as the tall, strong government chief threw the canvas from his sled, and shouldering a skin-wrapped pack of considerable weight, carried it into the Government house.

"I've got some things here that will interest you," he said to Thompson, as he began untying the leather thongs that

bound the pack. "You remember Stenson, the explorer? Well, it seems he has gone far to the east of the mouth of the Mackenzie and has discovered some new tribes of Eskimo."

"East of the mouth of the Mackenzie!" Kituk's heart stood still. Perhaps it was these tribes who made the ancient seal-oil lamps.

But the moment the pack was opened the seal-oil lamps were forgotten entirely for the wonder of the things spread out before him.

"These," said the government chief, "were made by the tribe of Nagyuktogmiuts which Stenson has discovered."

There were a hundred or more small articles, spear points, arrow points, skinning knives, skin scrapers, and every other conceivable thing that an Eskimo man or woman might use in the daily round of duties, and the wonder of it was, *they were all made of copper.*

Kituk stared in open-mouthed astonish-

ment. No Eskimo people had been known to make things of copper before. What manner of Eskimo might these be?

"These Nagyuktogmiuts," went on the government chief, "live in snow houses in winter and hunt on the ice of the ocean, and in summer they live in skin tents and sometimes in stone houses. Stenson has been with them for a year and is still there studying their life and gathering ethnological material. He sent these articles out by the whaler *Carluke* which wintered farther east last year than any whaler has ever wintered and which touched at Point Barrow late in the summer."

"Nagyuktogmiuk! Nagyuktogmiut!" That was a Point Barrow expression. Kituk had heard it. What did it mean? Suddenly it came to him. He suppressed an exclamation and went on examining the copper instruments.

Just then Thompson announced that the coffee and "mulligan" were ready, and after a hearty meal the white chief went

spinning away after his splendid dog team on his way to Nome.

For a long time Kituk sat thinking in silence. The government man saw what was going on in his mind and did not disturb him. At last Kituk spoke. "Thompson, if those are Eskimo people, I ought to make their village on my trade journey north, hadn't I?"

"It would be a splendid thing to do," said the government man thoughtfully. "The chief told me that Stenson sent word that some of the people had starved last spring between seal hunting and the coming of the caribou."

"Oh! Then I must go!" exclaimed the Eskimo boy, rising and walking the floor.

"But you must remember this," said the government man slowly. "There would probably be no chance to return the same summer. You would be obliged to allow your boat to freeze in for the winter and return in the spring."

"Oh!" Kituk exclaimed at this new

phase of the problem. Then as another thought struck him, "Ah-ne-ca! What do you suppose that name Nagyuktogmiut means?"

"Haven't a notion. What?"

"Nag-yuk-tog-miut," the boy repeated slowly. "They kill all strangers."

For a long time they thought in silence, while the clock on the shelf tick-tocked, tick-tocked the moments away. It was an interesting and fascinating problem that had presented itself to their minds. And though he had not said it, Kituk knew full well that the government man was thinking of the same thing that he was, and that in all probability if Kituk decided to venture on the journey in his gasoline schooner, his first mate would be the one who had taken many another adventure with him, Thompson the government teacher.

"Nagyuktogmiut. They kill all strangers," Kituk murmured at last.

"But they didn't kill Stenson," said Thompson quickly.

"No, they didn't," agreed Kituk. Nothing more was said, but Kituk knew that the matter was really settled, and that next summer, after the spring trading had been attended to, they would arrange to have his next summer's trade taken care of and with their schooner loaded with trade goods would head away to the east of north and the land of the Nagyuktog-miuts.

CHAPTER VII

A STRANGE ADVENTURE

HAD Thompson chanced to look behind him, his mind might have been occupied with far different thoughts. But he didn't; he marched steadily on through the white silence of that Arctic wilderness of ice, his eyes occasionally searching this way and that, but always ahead, and his mind going over the incidents of the last nine months, as one's mind has a way of doing as one tramps alone.

The visit to the land of the Nagyuktogmiuts had been determined upon that very day on which he and Kituk had heard of them for the first time. The details had been worked out later. Little by little the definite plans had shaped themselves; the kind of trade goods they should carry,

including needles and thread for the women and some calicoes, and a good supply of ammunition and rifles for the men. If these people could make a living almost sufficient for all the year around with their own primitive hunting implements, how much better they might do if they had the white man's guns and ammunition!

At last his mind turned to the Nagyuktogmiuts themselves. What sort of people were they? Did they indeed "kill all strangers"? And was the body of the white explorer, who had been so hardy as to visit them, by this time lying on some icy shore or hidden beneath the Arctic snow? When they had touched at Point Barrow they had made attempts to employ two young Eskimos to accompany them on the journey, but had not succeeded. The explorer had taken three Eskimos on his trip to the land of the Nagyuktogmiuts, and none of them had returned. So said the Eskimo people of Point Barrow.

What was to show them that these savage tribes had not lived up to their custom and "killed all strangers", including the explorer and his Eskimo companions? No, indeed! They would not go! Thompson thought of this now, and his brow clouded. It might well be that the explorer and his Eskimo companions had been murdered, and that he and Kituk would share their fate. But the very fact that the explorer had not returned was all the more incentive for them to make the perilous trip. If he still lived, he would doubtless be wishing for an opportunity to return to civilization. He had been fortunate in making the trip there overland. It might well be that he had made repeated trials to return and had failed. The whale ship had left those waters more than a year before, and since that time nothing had been heard of the explorer and his natives.

So Thompson's thoughts ran. Now and again he looked this way and that,—at the wonderful ice-scape which spread out before

him. Here were great hills of ice ground into round bowlder-like shapes and white with the salt that had frozen within them. Here and there were piles of fresh water from the mouth of some river, which stood out blue and shining like blue diamonds displayed on white. Here were cakes set on end, hundreds and hundreds of them, making one feel that he was walking through some ancient cemetery. Thompson thought of all this, and being of an artistic nature, he often paused to admire, but never once did he look back.

Again he was thinking of their journey. Fortune had favored them so far. There had been an exceptionally open sea way into September, so they had pop-popped ahead day after day, skirting the north coast of the Arctic, past Point Barrow, past the mouth of the Mackenzie, on and on till it seemed they would reach the land of the Nagyuktogmiuts by water and perhaps return that summer. But one day, as they had expected, the ice had come

drifting down from the north and closed about their schooner, locking them securely in for the winter. Now they were snugly housed in their schooner cabin, with a snow-house lean-to for the dogs, waiting for the rivers to freeze over before attempting to continue their journey by dog team. They had been both fortunate and unfortunate in getting so far by schooner; fortunate in that the sled journey would be short; unfortunate in that, if the ice should not go away during the coming summer, they would be locked in for another year. Thompson thought of this, and his brow clouded again.

At last his mind swung about to the business in hand. Even then he did not look behind him. Some hours before he had seen a yellow mass outlined against the white ice a few miles from the schooner. "I believe it is a white bear," he had said to Kituk, and taking his rifle had gone unaccompanied in the direction of the object. Once away from the eleva-

tion of the schooner's deck he had been unable to see the object any longer, and was obliged to get a general direction and follow that.

"I think I must have gone a little too far to the right," he thought to himself, as he looked before him and still could see no signs of the bear or his tracks in the snow. Turning to the right he went on a little farther, then paused to consider. At this moment he thought he heard something behind him. But it was such an absurd notion that by force of will he did not turn to look. "One gets spooky notions in such a cemetery-like place," he said to himself as he tramped on.

Soon he paused again. He was about to continue on his way when he heard a sound like the hissing of a gander directly behind him. Turning quickly, he found himself face to face with a gigantic white bear. He was gaunt and hungry looking, but he was immense. The government

man judged him to be twelve feet from tip to tip. It had been the bear he had heard before. It had been the bear who had hissed the warning. Probably he had been stalking the man just as the man had been stalking him for an hour. Now he stood there, on a high pile of ice, staring down at the man. He was the first free, live white bear the man had ever seen. The man was doubtless the first man the bear had ever seen. He had been stalking the man for food, just as he might have a seal or a baby walrus. Now he stood there, his red tongue hanging out, a sort of grin on his great face, his short white ears quivering, his ponderous paws uncertain.

Thompson drew his rifle from his shoulder. It would be a peach of a shot! Should he do it? Could he do it? The bear had given him warning. If he had not, there would have been no story told. Why had he done it? Who knows? They did not need the food nor the skin. It would be only for sport. But if he

didn't, what would his companion, the brave young hunter, say? Three times he raised his rifle. Three times he lowered it. The bear stood there, still grinning. The fourth time he raised it. This time he pulled the trigger. But he did not shoot at the bear, but over his head. He had decided that the rules of war required him to return the courtesy and give warning. Immediately the great bear wheeled about, and disappearing down the side of the ice hill, came out on the plateau of ice beyond and was soon away in the distance. Thompson threw his rifle over his shoulder, and, turning, made his way in the opposite direction toward the ship, still wondering what Kituk would say.

"Where's your bear?" Kituk grinned, as he approached the schooner. "You didn't get him! Didn't you see him?"

"Sure."

"Too far away?"

"Nope."

"Then why? You — you weren't

afraid —" the boy hesitated, a disappointed look coming into his face.

For a moment the white man did not answer. Should he tell the boy all that had happened? Men said that these child people, these Eskimo, only half a generation from complete ignorance of even the spelling book, did not have the sentiments of more cultured folks; they did not love as others did, they did not have friends as others did, they had none of the finer sentiments. Thompson knew in his heart that much of this was all pure theory. But, after all, would this born hunter understand how a man could allow a bear to escape just because he had given warning before he attacked? Well, anyway, he would see.

Sitting down on the deck he laid his rifle across his shoulder and told in as simple language as possible what had happened. Kituk listened attentively. As the story was finished, his face spread over with an appreciative grin.

"Ah-ne-ca!" he exclaimed, "I didn't know anybody else did that way. I did it once myself."

The white man stared for a moment, then extended his hand. "Shake," he said and the handshake bound the white man and his Eskimo companion in a closer bond than kinship might have done.

That night, before they retired, Kituk went on deck and stood there for a long time, feeling the breeze blowing on his cheeks and looking away toward the north where the stars were shining. His brow was wrinkled. The wind was from the north; not a very strong breeze yet, but stronger than three hours before. Would it increase and drive the ice on shore, thus endangering their little craft? This was the question which troubled him. He remembered all too well the anxious hours they spent when the schooner was carried through Bering Straits in an ice jam. She had stood the strain and press then. She was said to be so strongly built that she

would pop out of an ice press like a nut from the nutcracker. But would she? She was not so strong as she once was. Should the wind hold off a few days longer and the cold continue, everything would be safe enough, for the ice drift would be cemented together for a mile by six feet of solid shore ice, but just now it was too soon for that. What would come of this breeze that was hourly freshening? Ah, well! He must wait. He would sleep to-night. To-morrow would be time enough to confide his fears to his companion.

For a brief time he allowed himself to contemplate the consequences of a wrecked schooner. They were many days' sled journey from the nearest camp of civilization. They could not hope to carry a quarter of the food needed, were they to attempt the journey back over land. They would be compelled to trust to their rifles and the plentifulness of game. Should either of these fail them, why, then

their bones would bleach on the sand dunes of the North Arctic shore.

Kituk shook the thoughts from his mind, but it was a flushed face that he turned to the northern breeze for one more look before he went below.

CHAPTER VIII

NAGYUKTOGMIUTS

KITUK paused, hesitated, then stood still. He felt a decided desire to turn back. Had he seen something black over yonder ice pile a moment before, or was it merely the shadow cast by the ice pile beyond? There was something terrible about this perpetual night which awed him. In his home at Cape Prince of Wales there was always a little sunlight, even on the shortest day of the year, but in this far northland now it had already been dark day and night for days and days. He could hardly remember how long.

And here he was marching along all by himself, miles from shore, over the ice of a great bay that was silent as a frozen river. He was in a land unknown to him. All

about him the ice piles and ice cakes up ended cast giant, purple shadows. Over his head shone the pale moon. All about was silence, silence so deep that it might almost be felt.

What wonder then that he paused and speculated on the dark spot which had seemed to appear above the ice pile and instantly to vanish. What wonder that through his mind there flashed the events of the weeks past; his anxiety at the rising of a great storm from the north; his fears confirmed; the coming of the great ice floes piling mountain high, tier on tier, and promising to wreck his craft like an eggshell; the placing of the capstan to pull the schooner shoreward to safety; the agonizing moments of suspense, as he watched the ice pressure grow stronger, more terrific, moment by moment; the great relief when the staunch little craft sprang from the jaws of her captor, and the wild joy of labor as, sweating at every pore, they tugged at the capstan

and drew their treasure to safety, — all this swept through his mind now as he stood there for one brief moment hesitant.

And the rest followed fleetingly on: how the great darkness had come swiftly down upon the land; how the rivers and overflows had frozen until at last they dared attempt the journey by sled to the Land of the Nagyuktogmiuts; how they had started, and on the third day had come upon a driftwood log which had been chopped by a dull ax such as the Nagyuktogmiuts used; how they had pressed on eagerly, till at last they had come to tracks of men; how they had found the snow village long deserted by people; how they had followed the trail till they had come to a village where were many sleds and hunting implements, all very curiously made, but still there were no people; and lastly how, when the dogs were tired from the long drive, he had volunteered to go ahead and see what he could discover. All this, too, swept through his mind and left him still

standing there, wondering about that dark spot he had seen for an instant above the ice pile.

What if this had been the head of a Nagyuktogmiut hunter who was stalking him stealthily through this shadowy, perpetual night? The thought staggered him for an instant. The very fact that there would be no morning, no coming of dawn, no dispelling light of day, but perpetual night, at least for so long a time that it seemed perpetual, appalled him. He wanted to turn back. But what was the use? They had come so far. They were nearing the goal they sought. They must finish, whatever the cost. He shook himself and resumed his tramping through the gloom.

But what kind of people would these Nagyuktogmiuts be? He had never been able quite to banish from his mind the meaning of their name, and it revolved in his mind now like a nightmare. "They kill all strangers. They kill all strangers."

But this was replaced by his rosiest dreams. And being a boy, he had had rosy dreams. Of course he was altruistic. He really wished to help these people to a better way of living, but he also had hoped that they might help him. Why not? Might they not have hidden away in their summer stone houses rich fox skins, black, silver, red, white, and cross-fox? Might they not have stores of rich ivory and great bales of whalebone? And would it not be right that he trade for these at rather high prices? Had not the risk of the journey been great both to themselves and the schooner? A man surely is right in charging enough for his goods to pay for his time and risk. So he had reasoned and so he had dreamed, and so he reasoned and dreamed now.

There was one more thing he had hoped to find in this strange land, and that was the quarry from which came the steatite rock out of which the seal-oil lamps had been made. Should he find this and the men

who made them, he would have a fortune in this alone, for many white men would pay a handsome price for one of these. Kituk thought of this also as he walked on through the moonlight. But dreams are often shattered by great realities. Suddenly the boy felt the impact of a body upon him, and he was borne crushingly to the ice.

For an instant he was stunned by the fall; then rousing himself, he threw all his sinewy young frame into the task of release. Not in vain had the faithful hours of native gymnastics in the "cosgy" been kept up by him. The creature that had borne him down was a man. He heard his harsh breathing and felt the grip of his arms about him. But doubling into a knot, Kituk gave a snake-like wiggle, at the same time twisting his muscles into iron-like bands, and was half free in an instant. Another writhe and twist, and he was on top of the stranger.

A terrific struggle followed, for the

stranger, seeing that he was about to lose his captive, threw all his power into the attack. But the boy was fresh and well fed. His head was cool. He allowed this giant to waste his strength, then with one trial of his splendid muscles, tossed the other on his back, and sitting upon his stomach, began dictating terms of peace.

"Ubagok! Nagoovaruktuk! See, I am good," he exclaimed. He spoke in his own language. To his intense relief he saw that the man understood. His language then was the language of the Nagyuktog-miuts. Hastily he told the man that he was a friend; that he carried no knife; that he would not kill him. That he would not kill any of his people nor throw a spell over them; that he would find new ways of getting "cow-cow!" (food).

At this word "cow-cow", the man's face relaxed and took on an expression of intense sadness. "Cow-cow peeluk! Cow-cow peeluk! Muckie! Muckie! Na-na-coo. Illaheute muckie! Muckie illa-

heute muckie!" The words sounded like a wail of a funeral song, and indeed so it was, for he was saying that for his people there was no food, and that they were dying; soon all would be dead.

At these words the boy leaped from his chest and pulled the gaunt, emaciated form to its feet. "Come!" he said, using English in his excitement. "Kullemuk! Hurry!" The stranger, who was now no less eager than he, led him with rapid strides to where, casting dark shadows in the moonlight, were the twenty or more round-topped snow houses of the village. All was silent. Not a dog barked at their arrival. Those had gone long ago. Led into one of the houses, Kituk beheld sights which made his blood run cold; emaciated forms of beings who scarcely moved or spoke, and when they did speak, spoke only of the food that was gone, of the great seals which did not come, of the white bears that did not come, of the fish that did not come, while some witch doctor chanted

an incantation to the spirits that the spell of death might be removed.

"Na-na-coo" (by and by), Kituk exclaimed, as he hurried back over the trail whence he had come. In half an hour he had told Thompson what he had seen. Something must be done. The ship was too far away to offer any solution. If they drove the dog team to the village, the natives would at once seize the dogs, kill, and devour them. Then they would all starve together. It was a terrible moment. Perhaps even stout-hearted Kituk wished himself safely back in the snug cabin of the schooner. These people were now their charges. They were starving. Something must be done for them. What should it be? Only one thing could be done. Game must be procured at once. But how could one expect to procure game where these hunters, doubtless brave and knowing, had failed? There was but one answer to this: The game, "oogrook" (big seal) and walrus, must be farther out to sea, perhaps miles

and miles away. Distance was the only hope. They could but skirt the village and make the attempt.

In a moment more they were spinning along over the ice, round this ice pile and that great ice pillar jutting out of the mass, ever northward toward the unknown, where there might be food for all, and where there might be food for none. This last thought staggered the government man. There was food on the sled but for two days' journey. One of these would be consumed by this hunting trip. They were five days from their schooner. What if they failed to find food? Well, that was not worth thinking about. They *must* find food! The necessity was for themselves as well as for these wretched creatures who would starve if help did not come soon.

This thought urged them on, and speaking encouraging words to the jaded dog team, they pushed on mile after mile over the glistening ice.

"Look out for overflows," cautioned Kituk. "We are getting to where the ice is newer. Sometimes it is very thin." He had hardly said this when there was an ominous crack, and they wheeled the team to an old and solid cake just in time to escape being thrown into the icy water.

They paused on the solid ice, panting from exertion and excitement.

"Listen," said Kituk, a moment later.

Thompson listened intently. It seemed to him that he heard a faint barking sound far away.

"A dog?" he asked. "Are we near another village?"

"No, walrus," said the boy excitedly. "They keep holes through the ice here all winter long, and sometimes they bark for hours. Guess they like to hear themselves sing."

Thompson smiled at the thought. He listened and heard the sound again. Quickly they turned the sled, and skirting the thin ice, traveled cautiously toward

the sound. It grew louder as they traveled.

It was an intense moment. Should the walrus cease barking, they would be unable to find him in this labyrinth of ice cakes and piles. If they found him, could they capture him? To shoot him would be easy, but to keep him from sinking back into the ocean was quite another matter.

"Can you use those things?" Thompson asked, as Kituk twisted the leather thong about a harpoon and lance he had taken from the half-deserted village.

"I don't know. I can try," said the boy modestly. They whispered to the dogs to move forward. They were coming nearer and nearer, and the walrus was still barking. Soon they would tie the dogs to an ice cake and proceed to steal upon the prey.

"Now!" whispered Kituk, his right arm tense as he balanced the harpoon for the throw.

The walrus has poor sight. The men

had much to be thankful for in this. By the aid of the semidarkness they had been able to creep quite close to the monster, who still sat half in the water and half on the ice, still "baying to the moonlight", his great white tusks shining in the shimmering light, his moustache bristling, his great goggly eyes bearing a semblance to a grin.

"Now!" whispered the boy again, and he cleared his line for the cast. Then zing! spat! the harpoon struck true. The keen point imbedded itself in the giant creature's thick hide. With the skill and agility of a trick performer, Kituk jabbed the copper-pointed lance into the solid ice, wrapped his skin rope many times about it, and stood in repose. He was not a moment too soon, for the line sang taut from the gigantic pull of the beast who, sinking from his air hole, had gone thrashing to his sand bar beneath, and was now exerting his every pound of energy to free himself. The muscles on Kituk's arms

This time the rifle rang out. *Page 95.*

stood out like knotted cords. Cold perspiration sprang from his brow, while the veins of his neck coursed red with straining blood.

Thompson leaped to his side. "No! No!" the boy waved him away with a motion of the head. "Be ready to shoot! Air! He must come for air!"

Understanding, the white man approached the opening in the ice and waited. He was greeted in an instant with a wild toss of spray which entirely blinded him, and this one shot was lost. The strain told on the Eskimo boy. Had he not shifted his position, he could not have held his ground, as the beast once more swerved at the line. But he said nothing. His splendid training was standing him in good stead.

The white man understood his mistake and stood a bit back and higher on an ice pile. Again the great head reappeared above the water, the monstrous mouth slashing foam. This time the rifle rang

out, and though the strength of the monster seemed unabated, there was blood in the foam as he rose again. The battle continued for half an hour. All the time the Eskimo boy stood strong at his post, though the gray frost of perspiration stood out over his face and made him seem a monument of snow. The lives of many depended now on his strength and endurance. At last, when it seemed that human frame could endure no more, the monster rose feebly, toppled, and leaping high in a dying throe, fell half upon the ice bank and lay there dead. The Eskimo boy fell an instant later and lay there as if he, too, had died of overstrain. But in another moment he was upon his feet and was dexterously cutting the body of the animal into strips ready for loading on the sled.

CHAPTER IX

A CALL OUT OF THE NIGHT

THE lump of walrus blubber, suspended from the conical ceiling of the snow house, drip-dripped its oil upon the sputtering, vacillating flame in the lamp. Kituk alternately dozed and thought. His thoughts were bittersweet. It had been good to save these poor creatures from starvation, to see them eat and lie down to sleep, to see the cheery light of the seal-oil lamps once more illumine their homes, and to realize that in the morning enough of the stronger ones might move to the outer ice where there were more walrus, and where with the aid of rifles food might be obtained in abundance. All this had been very satisfying to the boy and his white companion.

But Kituk had hoped that these people would have something to give in return for their rifles, their ammunition, and other supplies. He scowled at the prostrate form before him. The man was wrapped in slumber, but he was also wrapped in something else. It was a skin robe, and down the center of this ran two strips of black which were once the coat of a magnificent black fox, such a hide as would have brought a thousand dollars in the market, and this man had worn it half away as a robe! A deerskin worth eight dollars would have done quite as well. But then, why blame these people? It had been years, yes, generations, since they had had trade relations with the other Eskimo people. Some tragedy of tribe hatred or blood revenge had built up an unsurmountable barrier that until now was never bridged. How were they to know the value of fox skins, ivory, whalebone?

Kituk scowled again. Whalebone? He had had the greatest difficulty in making

them understand what he meant, and when he had, they had replied, "Oh, yes, it is very good for fishing lines when the tomcod are running." What was the use? Ivory they had used for harpoon handles and such things, or thrown away. It was not half so useful as copper, so they said. It was hard for this keen young trader to realize that customs made values. It seemed to him that they should have realized the uncommonness of these trade articles and saved them, just as his own people had done. But he was obliged to face the fact that they had not, and that it was more than likely that he would be obliged to return to civilization empty-handed, his only reward the pleasure of having aided some simple people to a better living. This was a great reward in its way, but would not go far in the good esteem of his own countrymen, who considered him the best trader on the Arctic mainland.

Mooning about this and dreaming mean-

while, Kituk watched the sputtering seal-oil lamp. Something at this moment caught his attention. It was a woman's copper knife for splitting skins. He picked it up and began to examine it. After a time he lost interest in it, but still held it in his hand, then began absent-mindedly drumming on an up-ended seal-oil lamp that stood beside him. He was on his feet in an instant, a suppressed exclamation on his lips. The seal-oil lamp had rung as clear and true as the mission bell at Point Barrow!

At that moment his attention was attracted by the commotion which began among the few Nagyuktogmiuts outside who were still awake.

It was Thompson who had first heard the cry for help. He had been wandering about in the moonlight, admiring the aurora borealis, which was more brilliant than he had ever seen it before. It lighted the whole heavens in a great golden curtain with fold on fold which wavered and

scintillated; now deep crimson and now fading to the gold of some mild-tinted rose. Now swinging to the right and now to the left, it reminded him of a pretty notion the medicine men have, that the light is the men of the sky playing bola ball, and the wavering is the winning or losing of a side.

From this reverie he was wakened with a shock by a cry from the darkness beyond. "Help! Help! Ubagok! Ubagok! Kullemuk! Kullemuk!" It came first in English and then in Eskimo. Thompson was so startled by the call in his own tongue in this strange dark land that at first he did not move. He knew it could not be Kituk, for the boy was inside the next snow house. He did not waste more thoughts, but calling to the natives about him, he seized the cord of a sled near by and went rushing through the labyrinth of ice piles, shouting "Uba! Uba! Uba!"

Soon he heard the call again, and in a short time found himself standing by the

edge of an overflow which was but thinly frozen. In the very middle of this, in a dark pool, he saw the form of a man. There was a dark path behind him, showing where he had struggled to make his way out to solid ice and had failed. He was now clinging to the edge of the ice, apparently too numb to proceed farther.

Without a moment's hesitation the government man, taking a running start, threw himself upon the sled and went skimming over the thin ice halfway to the stranger. The moment the sled stopped, it crashed through the ice and left Thompson to struggle as best he might in the burning, benumbing water. He had expected this, and drawing a small copper hatchet from beneath his parka, he began swimming forward with one hand, while he broke the ice before him with the copper hatchet.

By this time Kituk and a number of the Nagyuktogmiuts had gathered on the solid edge of ice to watch and render any

assistance they were able, which was almost nothing at all, as Kituk realized with a twinge of anguish, for these people, though living on the sea, find it better to avoid the water than to learn to swim in it. Indeed, it appeared that swimming was an unknown art to the Nagyuktogmiuts, for they looked on in amazement as Thompson made his way steadily forward, while such exclamations as "Walrus-man! Seal-swimmer! White-bear-man!" came from their astonished lips.

Kituk looked on with wonder, pride, and anxiety, realizing full well what the water meant to a man in such a clime and at such a temperature. But suddenly he caught his breath and started involuntarily forward with a cry of dismay. In striking at the ice before him, Thompson had allowed the copper hatchet to slip from his grasp. The force of the spent blow sent him forward with a lunge and he disappeared beneath the surface of the ice before him.

To the natives about him Kituk saw that this seemed only part of the play. For them Thompson's swimming was a miracle. He was doubtless a favorite of the spirit. He would get on as well beneath the ice as above it. But to Kituk it was a tragedy.

CHAPTER X

THE EXPLORER

FROM his boyhood Thompson had been a strong and skillful swimmer. As he felt himself slide beneath the ice his mind worked rapidly. The instructions of his master came to him like a flash: "If you ever go under the ice swim for the dark spots." Before him lay a dark spot. Could he reach it? He must! He held his breath and struck for the dark spot. In what seemed an instant of time to the watchers on shore, but an age to the swimmer, he shot out on the far side of the ice and came up blowing beside the benumbed stranger.

Without a moment's delay, Thompson bade the stranger cling to his parka hood, and turning, threw his weight upon the

ice-crust again and again till he had made a way to the narrow channel beyond. In a moment more he was grasped by Kituk and one of the Nagyuktogmiuts, who had waded as far out into the icy water as they dared. The stranger was seized by two others, and these in turn were helped by twoscore of willing hands on to the dry ice, and all were hurried away to the house, where they were stripped of their stiffening garments, vigorously rubbed and pounded, then wrapped in warm skin rugs. At last, as they lay side by side near the seal-oil lamp, the stranger caught a sight of Thompson's face, and for the first time realized that it had been a white man who had saved his life.

"You are Stenson, the great explorer," said Thompson quietly.

"Not great," said the other, "but Stenson, a humble wanderer. And who are you?"

"The government teacher from Cape

Prince of Wales," replied Thompson. "My friend Kituk and I thought you might be wishing for some tea and cheese, and that perhaps you might wish to come back to civilization."

"I'm living in a civilized country now," said the stranger stoutly, but still smiling, "and I have no notion of leaving just yet, but as for tea and cheese, I admit they'd taste a bit like home."

Kituk, who had wriggled free from the friendly hands which would have wrapped him too in a sleeping blanket and had crept into the dry clothing which he found hung upon a line above the bed-shelf, was curled up on the floor, listening in silence to the talk of the white man. The explorer told of his many adventures during his two years of life among these tribes of the far north. To all this Kituk listened with intense interest, but when they began talking of their own country; who had been elected president; what college each had attended, and the mutual

friends they had in that far-away land, he lost interest and began talking in low tones to the Nagyuktogmiut nearest him, who had just awakened from a nap.

To his surprise he found that this was the man who had attacked him the night before. Kituk was told frankly that it was the man's intention to strangle him, since he had no other weapons than his hands. "For," said he, "I believed you were the evil one who was causing the famine and death in our village. If I could but kill you, all would be well. The oogrook would return and the tomcod and walrus. But now I see that I was quite wrong. We all know now that you and your companion are friends of the good spirits, and that you can do anything and get anything you please, so long as you do not offend the spirit."

"How did you find that out?" asked Kituk, smiling.

"Is it not very clear?" asked the man. "Did you not go out and come back in

three hours with a walrus? Would it not take a Nagyuktogmiut a whole day to kill a great bull walrus? Does not your friend go in water like a seal and under ice in water like a fish? Can men who are not friendly with the good spirits do this?"

Kituk did not answer. He did not wish to attempt to tell the man that he was wrong before he spoke with Thompson about this rather strange turn of affairs. He was gazing absently at the floor, thinking of all these strange events, when his eye caught something shining on the deerskin rug before him. There were two of them, — brass buttons they were, — tarnished and battered, and worn smooth here and there by much carrying.

He held them in his hand and began studying them carefully. It seemed to him that there were raised letters on them. And indeed there were. H. M. S. he made out at last. He spelled it out loud. The explorer looked up in surprise. Then seeing what Kituk had, he uttered

an exclamation and held out his hand. Kituk gave them to him.

"Thank you," said the other, "I am glad you found them. They fell from my wet clothing and might have been lost. In all my two years' wanderings they are the only trophies I have found of the ill-fated Sir John Franklyn Expedition."

Then, seeing that the Eskimo boy was interested, he went on:

"H. M. S. stands for Her Majesty's Ship, and these are buttons from the coat of some brave fellow who lost his life in these very lagoons or hills or tundra. There were two great ships and one hundred and twenty-nine men. They were searching for a northwest passage from one great ocean to another. Their ships were surrounded by the ice floe somewhere in these very waters, and were never released. They wandered from island to island, from cape to cape. Their brave leader died and was buried somewhere in these hills. Of all the hundred

and twenty-nine, not a soul survived. Probably they were all dead within two years. Many ships started out to find them. Other lives were lost, but all that was found of them at last was their bones, their boats, their loaded guns, their cooking utensils. They had tried every means of escape, until finally here and there they had been overtaken with disease and starvation; and here, after all these years, you see the only relics that can be surely identified with that ill-fated expedition."

Kituk sat wrapped in silent thought at the close of the explorer's speech. He was trying to picture the horror of being lost in a dark and desolate land far from one's own people. At last the pity and the needlessness of it all swept over him with a great wave of emotion.

"Why — why — why," he exclaimed, "why did they not live here among the Nagyuktogmiuts?"

The explorer smiled. "You well may ask," he said slowly. "We white men

have many things to learn from your people. If they had put themselves under the guidance of these people, had assisted them to procure game, — caribou by hundreds in summer and walrus in winter, — they had guns and ammunition which the natives did not have; if they had done this, I have no doubt that the greater part of them would have lived to tell the story to their grandchildren. But," he ended in a thoughtful voice, "there's no use telling what might have been. We white men learn but slowly. I wager there is not one white man in a hundred to-day who would believe that a white man can live on lean meat and blubber alone from one year to another, without tea or coffee or even salt. But this, nevertheless, is a fact."

The Nagyuktogmiuts were preparing to move to the new hunting field. Kituk heard them as they chattered cheerfully, or called to one another to bring this or

that for the packing. Soon all would be in motion. The snow houses, deserted, would stand shimmering in the moonlight, while new houses, a whole new town in the distance, would rise like magic. There, by the aid of the two white men and Kituk, with their rifles, the people would doubtless fare very well till the coming of the caribou in the springtime. How different was this life from that lived by his own people, who did journey here and there in their skin boats during the brief summer time, but who for nine long months stayed securely housed in their innies built of logs and sod! How charming it all seemed to the adventurous boy, now that the danger of famine was past! He imagined himself living year after year with these people, journeying always with them from hunting ground to hunting ground, for caribou in spring, musk-ox and fish in summer, seal, oogrook, and walrus in winter, always a free, wandering, outdoor life.

But then there came a little wave of homesickness. He wanted to see his own people; the great ragged Cape Prince of Wales Mountain with his little home village nestled beneath it. And besides, he had his obligations to his people. Was he not their best trader? Did he not bring them food before the other schooners, and save them from being robbed or starved? Ah! Yes, he must return.

But again he thought of the unfortunate hundred and twenty-nine who had wandered over these hills and tundra long ago. Their boats had been ice-locked. Might this not very easily happen to their own? What if the explorer had made the trip overland once? Was this any reason to believe it might be done again? Once more he saw himself wandering with these Nagyuktogmiuts year after year, a virtual exile from his own land, shut away by hundreds and hundreds of miles of ice, snow hills, and wind-blown, treeless tundra. A head was thrust in at the door. It was

that of a young girl of sixteen. Kituk imagined himself wedded to such a one as this. In a moment he shook himself and scowled. The thought was not pleasing to him. He threw his arms back in a gesture of disgust.

One of his hands struck something which tumbled with a dull thud to the floor. Looking to see what it was, he realized that it was the steatite seal-oil lamp he had noticed hours before and had quite forgotten. He picked it up and examined it carefully. It was genuine surely, and the most splendid one he had ever seen, nearly three feet long and weighing at least fifty pounds. At once his trader instinct was roused. It must be that they were near to the quarry from which these rare lamps were made, else this one would not be so large. He looked about the room. There were three of the lamps here. Were there as many in the other houses? Well, perhaps not, for some houses were smaller, but there would be

at least fifty in all. Could these people be induced to part with them? If they could, would it be possible to arrange some other form of lamp for the winter till the supply could be renewed? Could he rightly take them, if this were not possible? Was it possible that the quarry was near enough so that he and Thompson might visit it? These and many other questions went racing through his mind. He felt as some wanderer might, who had suddenly come into a cave sparkling with diamonds. There was no longer any idea of not returning to his own country in the springtime. With the possibility of carrying home such treasure he must return!

But the shouting of the villagers grew louder and more excited, telling that soon the journey would begin. Stretching his stiffened limbs, he stood for a moment by the seal-oil lamp, then bending, dropped to his knees and crept from the house into the broad, everlasting moonlight of this weird land.

CHAPTER XI

LOST

THOMPSON was slow to admit that he was lost. It seemed such an impossible thing. He had always been able to keep his bearings in every condition and circumstance; yet he had gone in the direction which he was sure should have taken him to the village of his friends, the Nagyuktogmiuts, and before him lay pile after pile of ice with no sign of the round domes of the native homes.

He altered his course a trifle and retraced his steps, still to no effect. It was very necessary that he find that village soon, for he had hunted long on the ice floes. He was tired and hungry, and by the feel of the air he knew the thermometer to be down to at least forty

degrees below. To attempt to rest in such a temperature without food would be perilous. So he tramped doggedly on, still unwilling to believe that he was lost. He was not willing even to consider the consequences of such a possibility. To be lost on a vast ocean of ice, which was crossed only at great intervals by the trail of a single native or by the camp trail of a native village, to be without a sleeping bag and with only a limited supply of ammunition would be a thing unthinkable. Yet the possibility forced itself upon him in spite of all his vigorous mental protest.

At last he sat down and thought the thing through. He could march on perhaps six hours longer. He was not sure his endurance would reach the seven-hour limit. He had tested himself out on the trail and knew that limit almost to a fraction of an hour. If he chanced upon a seal or a white bear, he could prolong his life somewhat longer, for with warming

food, he might risk a short sleep. He thought this out carefully, then rose to go forward. It did not much matter now in what direction he was to go, for he had at last admitted that he was lost. The all-important thing was to go in a straight line. By this method he might cross the trail of a hunter or the camp trail of a village, or he might reach the shore, where his chances for shelter would be much better. Knowing that in walking he had a tendency to turn to the left, he attempted to allow for this bit of "personal equation" by dragging himself by force toward the right. By this method he felt that he was keeping a fairly straight-ahead course, though it might be somewhat hitchy and crooked in smaller details.

Three hours, four, five, six hours he marched stolidly on; his eyes were ever alert, but his mind, as far as possible, was asleep, for he realized that he needed to conserve nervous energy, and thinking used up this energy. He rejoiced to find that

he was going to be able to do seven hours. Even a man who faces death rejoices in an unrealized abundance of life.

But suddenly his heart leaped with joy. He had come upon the broad, beaten trail of an Eskimo village!

What village it was he did not stop to consider. Indeed, it was too late for all that. He must have shelter and food and that within an hour, or he would fall in the trail.

Almost before he realized it, he was being surrounded by dark phantom-like figures which now appeared above the ice piles and now disappeared. It was evident that he was among strangers.

The old play of suspicion, suspense, and perhaps a fight was evidently to be enacted here. In his physical condition, he was no match for the weakest of the strangers. It was useless to go farther. To do so was to waste his strength, of which little enough remained. Selecting a great, broad ice cake which had been reared into the

air by the press of the floe, he stood with his back to it. Should he throw down his rifle as a sign of peace? He did not know the temper of these new villagers. He threw a cartridge into his rifle instead. In his veins there flowed the blood of the Anglo-Saxon race. The spirit of self-defense was part of his heritage. It was evident that the strangers were armed only with copper-pointed spears. He must not allow them to approach too closely.

But all this suspense and speculation vanished in an instant. A new and peculiar interest occupied the thoughts of all. A small child, dressed in a spotless white fawn-skin parka, wandered out into the open space between the hiding place of the Eskimos and the vantage point of the white man. She had the strange, quick, groping step of the blind.

"Ca-ca! Ca-ca!" (Beware! Beware!) came from every native. But the child, misinterpreting their warning, continued in the direction from which no warning

came. That was in the direction of the white man. In a moment she was within reach of his hand. Obeying instinct merely, he did that which he would have done under any other circumstances; he placed his hands gently on her shoulders and turning her right-about said,

"Ubagok!" (That way!)

Then for just a moment he allowed his hand to rest on the child's uncovered head. And in that instant he became conscious of the fact that her hair was flaxen and her face as fair as his own!

Instantly there came to his mind the words of Stenson, the explorer:

"Some of these people to the east of you are as white as you or I. I have sent that word back to the world outside, and they do not believe me, that is, many of them do not. If you can persuade some of those blond Eskimos to accompany you to Point Barrow, on your return, where they will be seen by a number of white people, you will do me a favor

which cannot be estimated." These had been the words of the explorer, and Thompson had promised to attempt the mission.

And now here he was in the very midst of the people he sought. Was he to be ruthlessly murdered by them on the eve of what might be his most wonderful adventure?

But his hand still rested on the head of the child, who seemed reluctant to move. The natives meantime had crowded round. So close were they now that the outcome of a battle, if battle there must be, was decided in advance. Fearing they might think he was working some charm upon the child, he gave her a gentle push, at the same time exclaiming, "Ubagok! Kullemuck!" (That way! Hurry!) and almost instantly she was once more with her people.

The little pantomime won the confidence of the villagers. Casting down their spears, they rushed forward, asking a

hundred questions at once, none of which Thompson was able to answer with satisfaction. But once he had shown them that he was hungry and tired, they ushered him to the village, and an hour later, having feasted on frozen fish, he lay down beneath a smothering supply of deerskins for a long sleep.

When he at last awoke from a refreshing sleep, it was with a dim consciousness of an unfulfilled resolve. After groping blindly about in his mind, it at last came to him. He had resolved to hunt out the little girl, who had saved his life by her helpless innocence, and to determine if possible whether her sight might be restored by a skilled physician.

"And if it can be," he told himself, "she shall be one of the blond Eskimos to go to Point Barrow, if it takes me two years to obtain the consent of her parents."

With this purpose in view therefore, as soon as he was dressed, he wandered out into the village and was fortunate enough

to come upon the child at once. It took but a moment's investigation to convince him that indeed her trouble might be remedied by a slight operation, and there again he formed his resolve to take her to Point Barrow, where she might be examined by the doctor who came every year on the revenue cutter, *Thetis*.

His attention was drawn from the child by a loud "Hello!"

It was Kituk who, having realized that the white man was lost, had been guided in his search by one of the Eskimos of the other village and had at last been brought to the village of the blond Eskimos.

Here, then, Thompson found himself reunited with his boon companion and at the same time face to face with the new problem of securing the consent of some of these blond Eskimos to return with him as far as Point Barrow. This would be no easy task. There remained but two months before the homeward journey must be begun. In this time he must

live with these people, hunt with them, share their hardships and joys, and if need be fight for them. He must win his way to their hearts completely, so completely that at least two or three of them would trust him to the uttermost. He resolved at once to concentrate all of his attention on the parents of the blind child. He had christened her Dawnless, in honor of the dawnless night which constantly hung over them.

CHAPTER XII

A FIGHT WITH INDIANS

THOMPSON marched along in a brown study. They had been on a pilgrimage to the steatite quarry whence had come the steatite lamps and pots of all the Arctic mainland of America and Asia. He had expressed a desire to see this spot, and when the blond Eskimo, father of Dawnless, had offered to lead him to it, he had instantly accepted, feeling that this little expedition to be undertaken only by the Blond with his wife and daughter, accompanied by Thompson and Kituk, would tend to strengthen the tie between them as perhaps nothing else could. He had been somewhat disappointed in the quarry. It had turned out to be merely a tumbled pile of rocks, strewn here and there with chips made

by workers of former days, and the whole half covered with snow.

He was quite as much disappointed in his task of securing the consent of the blond Eskimo to bring his wife and child to the coast with him. The west held some evil dread for the simple man of the icy wilderness. Perhaps in days gone by there had been some great battle between these people and the people of the west, just as there had been between the people of the Siberian mainland and the inhabitants of the Arctic coast of the American continent. Indeed it would seem that there must have been, for else why did not the traffic continue between these two territories just as it must have done when the aged steatite lamps were brought to the west coast?

Thompson, therefore, was troubled. How was he to prove to these people that he could guarantee them safe conduct, or at least, that he would risk his own life to guarantee them protection?

The answer came in an instant of time. He was wakened from his meditation by an exclamation from Kituk. Looking up quickly, he beheld in the broad ice plain beyond, where their snow houses stood, a score of figures dancing about on the ice.

That these were not Nagyuktogmiuts nor blond Eskimo he knew in an instant. They were not dressed in furs, but in skins, and were of a taller and slimmer build. Almost unconsciously the words, "Indians from the Land of the Little Sticks," came to his lips.

This supposition was instantly confirmed by both Kituk and the Blond.

Here then was a predicament! In coming to the mine they had gone a five-day journey from the rest of the tribe of Blonds. Their food and their sleeping bags were in the snow igloos about which the Indians were dancing. To return on a five-day journey without food or shelter, when they were already hungry and

exhausted, seemed beyond the power of any man's endurance and especially impossible for the little Dawnless, who for some time had been carried either by her father or by Kituk.

Suddenly Thompson remembered to have heard the Blond say that he had at one time been held as a slave by a village of these Indians. He must, therefore, know their language.

"Tell the Blond to ask them what they want," said the white man, turning to Kituk.

Having received the request, the Blond made his hands into a trumpet and shouted some words of a strange tongue to the dancing natives. They at once stopped their dancing, and one of them hurled back an answer which bore all the tones of utter defiance.

"What did he say?" asked Thompson.

The Blond seemed reluctant to answer, and there was an unwonted huskiness in his voice as he said to Kituk:

"They say they wanted only food when they came to our camp, but now one of their members has been bewitched to death by my little blind girl, and they demand blood revenge. They would kill her." The Blond rested one hand on the child's head as he finished speaking, and the mother, uttering a little cry of alarm, fell on her knees and clutched the child's feet as if in defiance to the demand.

Thompson meditated for a single moment. He was thinking over the incidents he had read in which these Indians from the Land of the Little Sticks had demanded blood revenge. In not a single instance, so far as he could remember, had a parley availed. Always there had been a fight or a forced acquiescence to their fanatical plans.

"Are you ready to fight?" he asked, turning to Kituk.

For answer Kituk threw a cartridge into his powerful rifle.

"Tell the Blond to take his wife and

child farther back behind the ice piles," said Thompson.

A moment later the white man and his Eskimo companion threw themselves for protection behind ice bowlders, ready to fight to the end.

"Shoot to lame and not to kill. Put their arms out of commission if you can," said Thompson, as five stalwart fellows, following their example, threw themselves behind barriers.

There was a sharp report, and a bullet whizzed over Thompson's head. The Indian, in recharging his rifle, left its muzzle exposed. In an instant, in answer to Thompson's unerring aim, the stock splintered into a thousand pieces, and the Indian, with a howl, left the combat to his four companions.

A second bullet smashed into Thompson's cake of ice and sent a splinter against his forehead which for a moment stunned him and left his face streaming with blood. Quickly tying his handkerchief

about his head to stop the flow of blood, he cheered his companion, who had disabled another Indian.

The battle was soon over. The Indians were no match for the marksmanship of the white man and the Eskimo, and at last they all retired, more or less disabled, leaving the camp in charge of its rightful owners.

As Thompson had suspected, the Indian which was said to have been bewitched to death was not dead but had drugged himself from Thompson's medicine chest. When he had been given an antidote, he was able to return to his own people, to tell no doubt how he had been raised from the dead by the white man. But Thompson's little party did not remain to see how he was received by his people, for the lack of blankets and supplies left in the deserted camp indicated that this was but a small scouting party, and that the main body of natives was not far away.

They were soon on their way back to the village of the blond Eskimos.

As they came to camp that night, the blond Eskimo and his wife talked long and earnestly together, and their glances were often upon the white man. At last the Blond, turning to Kituk, said:

"Peeleeuktuk wunga, sulie, cunie, sulie micakininie, nagoovaruktuk." Having finished, he pointed first toward the west, then toward the white man.

Kituk, smiling, explained that he had said that he and his wife and child were ready to accompany Thompson to Point Barrow.

Thompson sprang to his feet and grasped the hand of the Blond, while he allowed the other hand to rest caressingly upon the head of the little, blind Dawnless, whom he hoped to have transformed into "Dawn" by the aid of a skillful physician.

But a long way lay before them. The

advancing of the daylight told them they had used up too much time on the trip to the quarry. They must hasten with all speed toward the point on the ice floe where their ship was waiting.

CHAPTER XIII

THEIR SCHOONER DRIFTS OUT TO SEA

KITUK was footsore and weary, almost asleep as he walked, but still he plodded on, unconscious of it all. Was not the very joy of living coursing through his veins? Was it not spring? Was not the sun shining all day and all night? Were they not soon to climb aboard their schooner and pop-pop away home? Why then, should one think of weariness and pain?

Yes, the sun was shining all day and all night. He remembered how the great darkness had disappeared little by little, little by little; how first there had been a faint flush in the southern sky; how noon by noon this had broadened and brightened till at last the red disk of the

sun had appeared for a few brief moments above the horizon; how it had risen, risen, risen day by day, till at last there were equal days and nights, and then how amazingly rapid was the increase day by day till there was no darkness at all, and one was obliged to hide his face in his sleeping rug to get needed rest.

He fairly bubbled over with joy as he thought of it all now, and how things had gone with them in these last days among the Nagyuktogmiuts. There had been the problem of trading for the steatite lamps without robbing the villagers of their much-needed light and heat. This was solved by the making of temporary lamps from heavy oaken timbers, which had been brought on the schooner for trade goods. Rifles, ammunition, needles, thread, and calico were traded for fifty lamps, and all were happy over the bargain, especially the Nagyuktogmiuts, who wondered how the two men could use so many lamps.

With spring had come the caribou, crack-cracking their way over the ice to their summer feeding ground far to the north, in lands quite unknown to the white man. These had paid their heavy toll to the larder of the Nagyuktogmiuts, for the white men had used their rifles freely though not wastefully.

There had been a glorious day of battle with three great barren-ground grizzly bears, as the three prime pelts on the sled before him testified.

Thompson had begged the explorer, Stenson, to return with them, telling him that the outside world was clamoring for a sight of him, but he had refused. He had other lands to discover and explore. He hoped to go far to the north during the coming summer and explore the summer home of the caribou. He had lived among the natives, eating their food and living their life, for two years; there was no reason why he might not do so for many years to come. He thanked them

for the taste of what they were pleased to call "civilized grub", and begged them to carry a great quantity of ethnological specimens to Nome for him. This they had been more than glad to do. These specimens were all aboard the schooner, as were the steatite lamps and other trophies of the journey.

Swish! Kituk's foot splashed in a pool of water. His brow clouded. They had lingered full long with their friends. They had been faced by an overflowed river and had lost three days skirting it. They were late. But again his brow cleared. Just over this next hill lay the ice flat where rested their schooner and its precious cargo. Just one more hard pull, and all would be well. Would the ocean be cleared of ice? Would they be able to sail away at once for the mouth of the Mackenzie, Point Barrow, home? Very soon they should see. If all was well they would return a day's journey and bring the blond Eskimo family to the

ship. He spoke to the tired dogs and ran ahead to encourage them. Seeing this, they plowed along at a more rapid pace, while the government man plodded behind, wrapped in thoughts.

Kituk, straining his eyes for a first sight of the ocean, gave a cry of dismay. The ocean had cleared indeed. It was cleared to within five rods of the sandy beach! The great flat of ice which bore their schooner had drifted out to sea! There was nothing to be seen but a broad expanse of restless, rippling waters!

Together the two sank upon the sled, which now rested upon the crest of the hill. All was lost, — their treasure, their schooner, the collections which had cost a brave explorer two years of toil, — all drifting somewhere on the ocean; a schooner with no sails set, no man aboard. And what was to become of Dawnless and her family? How utterly tired they were! How their muscles ached! How their stomachs craved food! There was

but one meal on the sled; but a few rounds of ammunition for the rifles. What fools they had been! They realized now how much they had been traveling in the light and strength of the joy of hope.

What could they hope for now? To return to their friends the Nagyuktogmiuts and the explorer was impossible. Already the river they had crossed must be swollen beyond its banks with madly rushing waters. To go forward seemed equally useless. How were they to make their way over the hundreds of miles of tundra and hillsides to the mouth of the Mackenzie? To do this in winter was dangerous; to do it in summer was impossible.

Yet "hope springs eternal." As they sat there alone, seemingly powerless to help themselves, there appeared above the next hilltop a pair of broad antlers and a magnificent brown head. Kituk's keen eyes saw it. Thompson saw it too, and was upon his feet, rifle in hand.

"No, let me!" the boy whispered eagerly, starting forward. "I am not so tired."

Thompson settled back on the sled. The boy was right. His brain, his hand was more steady for a time like this. Just what the successful stalking of this lone caribou, which, by some chance, had strayed from the herd which must have gone north weeks before, meant to these two wanderers no one knew. It might stand between them and death. It might merely postpone that event a few days; it would do this, at least.

As Thompson sat watching, the head disappeared. For a moment his heart stopped beating. Had Kituk seen it? Ah! yes, he had, for he was beginning to skirt the hillside. But again the head appeared farther toward the sea. Again there was a moment's suspense, but again the skillful hunter saw and changed his movements.

And now as the caribou raised his

splendid head to sniff the air, Kituk leveled his rifle for the shot. Thompson hardly dared breathe for fear that the animal, a mile away, might hear and go bounding off. Slowly, steadily, the rifle rose. Now it wavered for an instant; now it stood firmly against the white hillside. Would he succeed? Could he? He was but a boy, and he was weary, fearfully weary, with the travel. Could he make the shot? There would be but one opportunity, for the animal, if missed, would go bounding down the hillside and away before he could be sighted again. So the thoughts coursed through the white man's brain as he waited the half second before the puff of smoke appeared at the muzzle of the rifle barrel, and the monarch of the tundra, staggering, tottered for the fall.

With shaking limbs the man arose and waved his hand above his head, while he uttered a hoarse shout.

For a time they were saved, but for

how long? Dragging the dogs to their feet, he bade them "Mush." There was a good feed before them, and soon enough they were munching at bones and juicy meat, while the men roasted bits over a driftwood fire and felt better for the moment because of the bracing push and vigor of food forcing the blood once more through their veins.

"You know," said Kituk, as they finished, "when I was on that second hill I saw an ice floe far to the north and west. The wind is north. The current is west. I wonder —" he did not finish. Thompson understood, but neither dared voice the hope.

"We'll rest for a few hours here," said the white man, "then we'll follow the coast west until we are stopped by a river."

CHAPTER XIV

SAVED

KITUK cut the rope and allowed the form to float free. Because of the silvery whiteness of his coat they had called him "Collemuk", which means flour. But now he drifted there, a poor drowned thing. The little waves rippling over him tossed the flakes of hair here and there, showing the protruding ribs beneath. He had paid the price. The cold and the struggle in the briny waters had been beyond his power of endurance. His gallant little soul had flown. Many times he had tugged bravely at the rope when the wind was howling out from the heart of an Arctic blizzard. Never again! Kituk thought of all this, and a great lump rose in his throat. And after this came a question:

would he, too, and his companion, the government man, share the fate of the poor little dog? Time only could tell, and a very little time at that.

They were standing on a cake of ice far from land, as far also from the object of their cold and perilous journey. Thompson stood on the other edge of the ice cake, his garments dripping the briny water, ready for another plunge and another short burning swim to the next cake. Could he endure it to the end? Could he swim from this cake, and that one, and that one till the schooner was reached? Kituk felt a blush of shame at his poor part in the matter. He could not swim; he could only hang to the sled and be half dragged through the water by the dog team while he paddled as best he could with one hand and Thompson swam ahead leading the dogs.

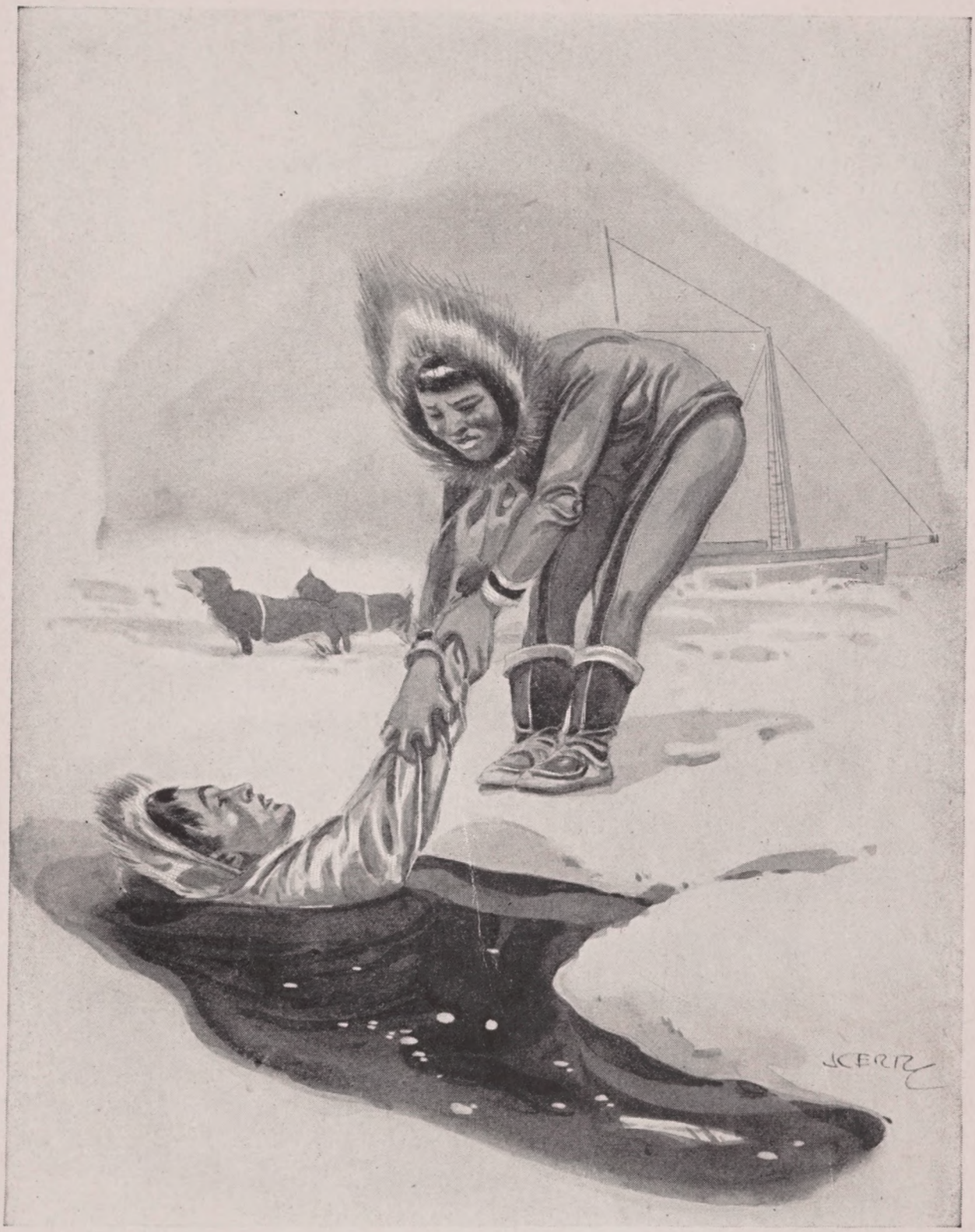
It had seemed that the vision they had had of an ice floe carried back to land, bringing their schooner with it, would be

realized. It was the very ice floe they had seen a week before which they were riding on now. They had followed it hour by hour through what seemed almost an endless calm when the floe only moved parallel with the coast, dragged on by the current. Finally they had sighted the cake which bore the schooner upon its surface. All was well with the schooner, they could see that. The cake had not broken up. Then they had followed, no food, no sleep save a nap snatched here and there, but followed, followed on and on to the west. They had mushed through the soft, spongy tundra. They had forded rivers and hung their clothes on willow bushes to dry, while they shivered in the pale Arctic sunlight.

At last the wind had changed to shoreward, and with highly beating hearts they had watched their precious schooner, which meant life or death itself to them, drifting, drifting hourly closer. It seemed beyond reason now that the whole floe would not come bumping on shore and

leave them but to make their way across the solid ice floor to their ship and to steam away. But when their hopes were highest, the wind suddenly calmed. Little by little the floe drifted still shoreward, borne on by its own impetus, but at last it had seemed to move no more. Then there came signs of a wind from the land which would drive the floe out to sea. There had been but one thing left to do, swim for it. To think of following the floe through another storm in which it would be blown out to sea, to hope then for its return would be utter madness. To remain on land was equally useless. They had seen no signs of game since the killing of the caribou.

Kituk reviewed all this duly in his mind while he shook the water in showers from his drenched clothing. But suddenly he drew himself together and prepared to push the dogs, poor shivering creatures, once more into the benumbing waters, and to follow them with the sled.



Kituk's strong hand was there to grasp him and drag him from the sea. *Page 149.*

There are some struggles which are too terrific for description; there are some indescribable blind agonies of pain and suffering, of hope and despair deeply blended. Such was the struggle of the government man as he made his way to the schooner which now seemed but a mirage and now a reality, until at last his hands touched the edge of the cake which bore the schooner on its shining surface. Then, feeling that he had reached the schooner at last, and putting out his hand to climb upon the deck, he fell back once more into the briny waters. But Kituk's strong hand was there to grasp him and drag him from the sea. The dogs were there to sled him speedily to the schooner.

There was soon a roaring fire in the little cook stove of the *Sea Wolf*, that little stove with one cracked lid and a warped crosspiece! There were rub-downs with the deliciously rough towels, which still hung on a rack by the fire. There were dim shadows of hot canned soup gurgling

down his throat. And then he slept. How long he slept, he could not tell, for the sun was shining all day and all night, and his watch was water-logged. Anyway, he awoke with a start and a groan, and then a glad shout, as he realized where he was. Kituk, who had been sleeping in a chair by the stove, started and rubbed his eyes. The well-fed, contented dogs on deck heard the shout and banged the deck with their tails.

"Kituk, wake up!" shouted the government man. "We're on the *Sea Wolf*, and it's your watch on deck."

"We're on the *Sea Wolf*," Kituk grinned sleepily, "but somebody's stopped the engine."

"We'll fix that all right," said the government man, creeping gingerly out of his berth. "Let's have mulligan for dinner."

To pole a smaller cake of ice close to this one, which bore their schooner, to set the capstan upon it and drag the

schooner close to the edge, to shove it with a splash into the ocean once more, to start the engine and go pop-popping back for Dawnless and then toward home were all very simple matters. The remainder of the journey was a round of joy. At every village they were hailed as men returned from the dead. At every village they traded one or more of their steatite lamps for valuable fox skins, mink skins, or beaver. At every point Kituk was given a great festival in his honor till Thompson became almost envious of his Eskimo companion, who had so many relatives and friends, and was tempted to wish himself one of them.

At Point Barrow Dawnless and her parents were left. Here Dawnless, through the aid of the skillful physician, was given her first glimpse of the world in which she lived, and here she remained, the wonder and idol of the village till winter came and released her for her homeward journey.

Here and there an eider duck drifted idly in the glassy waters, while beneath shone the phosphorescent light of a hundred jellyfishes. Thompson's heart was at peace. They were short of gasoline, but what of that? The sails were set, and the gentle breeze bore them hourly nearer to Cape Prince of Wales, where they would be welcomed by three hundred people, eager to hear of their adventures, and to know of the success of their trip and their trading. Suddenly there was wafted to him from over the far-away sand dunes the snatches of a tune.

"Hi la lee, hi la lee, hi la lee, la lo! Hi la lee, hi la lee, hi la hila la lede O!"

Kituk grinned. Thompson threw his cap into the air. It was Oblecok, the fattest, laziest of his reindeer boys. But what of that now? It was one of his own people! How often he had heard him sing that tune, as he went about the work of the deer camp or drifted upon the sea in his kiak.

He raced to the engine room and threw the whistle wide open in three wild screeches.

Heads appeared above the sand dunes, followed by wild shouts of delight. In half an hour the deck was swarming with deer herders, their wives and their children, all "Matna"-ing and "Ah-ne-ca"-ing at the strange wonders which had come from the land of the Nagyuktogmiuts and at the tales which the travelers had to tell.

The remaining steatite lamps, with the furs traded for along the coast, were disposed of for a good figure at Nome. Taking it all in all, the trip was a fairly profitable one, and the two boys felt well repaid for their year of danger and hardship. They had made life more possible to some isolated people; they had forwarded the cause of knowledge and science a little, and had maintained Kituk's name of "Best trader on the Arctic Mainland."

Kituk took on a new stock of trade goods and pulled out for the Siberian

towns, while Thompson sailed on the mail steamer back to his post, where he relieved his substitute and resumed his work. For a time he dragged his bed to the floor and slept on a deerskin rug, but at last he became accustomed to the luxuries of his own kind of civilization, and life went on as before; only for both the government man and the Eskimo boy, life was richer and better for the joy of the memory of experience and adventure.

CHAPTER XV

BLACK NUGGETS

"But, Mr. Luther, you do not realize how unreasonable it is!" exclaimed Thompson. "Perhaps you do not know that it will mean a great deal of suffering for our Eskimo people."

"Sufferings or no suffering," the miner's face hardened, "I piled the wood while they were wasting their time at Nome. You know as well as I do that according to their law as well as our own, that makes it my wood. They killed my dog last year. If they can get along without me, I can get along without them."

"But your dog was chasing the reindeer."

"Do they kill a dog every time he chases a cow in the States?"

"In Alaska the dogs kill the deer."

"Not mine." The miner struck his fists together savagely, then turned to go into his cabin.

"You — you wouldn't sell the wood?" Thompson faltered.

"No, I might need it myself." At that the miner went into his cabin and closed the door behind him.

Thompson wrinkled his brow as he turned to make his way back around the foot of Cape Prince of Wales Mountain to his Government schoolhouse and the native village. Here, indeed, was a serious situation. This miner, who was in charge of the tin mining property of Tin City, had piled all the summer's driftwood on the beach that lay before his cabin. This had been the common wood-gathering ground for the entire village of Wales, some three hundred Eskimos. Drifting out of the mouth of the Yukon, some hundred miles away, the wood had been carried by the currents here and there,

till at last it lodged on this broad stretch of sandy beach. There in the autumn, when they returned from their trading, the Eskimos would find it and pile it for their winter's use. But this year they had found it all neatly piled before their coming. And, according to their law, as the miner had said, this piling had made it his wood.

The situation would not have been so serious in the early history of the Eskimo people, for in those days they did not have the tiny stoves bought from the white men, or made ingeniously out of old scraps of tin.

In those days, too, there had been an abundance of whale oil, and they had depended upon their whale-oil and seal-oil lamps for warmth. But now, with no wood and no oil, and no opportunity of buying coal at any price, what were they to do?

"Need it himself!" Thompson exploded. "'Bout as much as I need a team of horses

and a mule! His bins are bursting with company coal!"

He looked away at the piles of white ice which lay all about him, and thought of this trail over which the Eskimo women had carried wood winter after winter on their small dog sleds. It was five miles; over ice bowlders, around ice piles winding here and there, the trail led to the village. Surely this was hard enough, but to be robbed of their wood entirely, and without warning, that was worse! The killing of Luther's dog the previous year had been unfortunate. Yet, it was only part of the old, old question, the question of the rights of dog and deer. In this land where the dog was worth from twenty-five dollars to three hundred, and where the deer was quite as valuable, problems were constantly arising. If Luther allowed his dogs to run free and they killed a deer, then surely he should pay for the deer. But there was no law that said so. It was easier to kill the dog before he killed the deer, so

thought the reindeer herders, and so they had done. And now — well, something must be done about the wood. But what, the Government man could not at this moment decide. He quickened his steps and was soon in his own house boiling coffee for his late supper.

"Captain Kituk", not Captain but just plain Kituk, for the time being, paused to rest in the shelter of a rocky cliff about which the winds swirled in angry gusts.

It had been a hard, disheartening trip. Tramping hour after hour, following the broad trail of the herd of fifteen hundred reindeer, expecting every moment to come in sight of them, he had at last discovered, mingled with the hard hoof tracks, the softer tread of some animal, a dog, or perhaps a wolf. Then, tightening his belt, he had marched on hour after hour, accompanied only by his golden collie dog, not knowing when he might sight the fleeing herd. At last he had come upon the torn carcass of a yearling, which had been

fallen upon by the pursuer and slaughtered.

Now the herd was started on their way back to camp, and for a moment the boy rested and thought over once more, for the hundredth time, the problems of the deer herders. For the time being, he was superintendent of the Wales herd, and as such it was his duty to solve as many of the problems as were within his power. There was always the problem of the prowling wolf. The reindeer, constantly watched during the short summer time when the fawns were young and helpless, could not be watched during the wild stormy winter. They were simply driven into camp every day, then allowed to go out once more into the foothills and tundra for feeding. If a wandering wolf appeared and stampeded them, there was nothing to do but follow and bring them back, just as he had done. And for the wolf, if he happened to be sighted, there was but one answer, a well-directed shot from

the herder's rifle, and his pelt made into parka collars.

But there was also the problem of the wandering dog. And though quite as dangerous and more numerous, his problem was quite different. He was some one's property.

Kituk scowled as he tried to think it all through. If this had been a dog, one of Joe Luther's dogs, and he should come upon him, what would he do?

"If this is one of his dogs and I kill it," thought Kituk, "what next will he do to my people and to me? He always claimed that his dogs were white man's dogs and would not kill reindeer, but I never saw a dog that would not kill a reindeer, unless he was a yellow collie dog. And his are great, gray fellows! My! What dogs they are!"

Kituk's eyes grew wide in admiration, as he saw once more in imagination that team of but three giant dogs carry the miner with the speed of the wind over the

glistening trail. He heaved a sigh of regret. "It certainly would be a pity to kill one of them!" Then straightening his shoulders, "But then, we have our rights too, and he should keep his dogs chained."

Just as he was about to go on his way after the herd, which was being urged on by his faithful collie, his eye caught something black lying among the small pebbles of the stream's bank. The wind, eddying about this spot, had left the ground bare. He picked the object up, then uttered an exclamation of surprise; "Ah-ne-ca! Heavy uk-tuk!" He had the custom of his people of combining Eskimo words with English words when excited. The bit of black rock was very heavy indeed. Kituk thought it nearly as heavy as the yellow nuggets for which the white men had searched his country far and wide. But this was black as the coal which the great steamers burned in their boilers. His first thought was to cast it

aside. But at last he stowed it away in his pocket and, searching about among the gravel stones, found two other lumps not quite so large as the first.

"Show them to Thompson," he said to himself, as at last he tied the string about his parka tighter, and turned to face the storm.

"You say you think it was a wolf?" Thompson turned to Kituk and smiled, when the boy was telling of the lost yearling a while later. This Eskimo boy was seldom wrong. "But what makes you think it was?"

"Big tracks and the way he killed the deer."

"Bigger tracks than Luther's dogs make?"

"No — but different — mebby —" the boy hesitated. "If it is Luther's dogs, what shall I do? Shoot 'em?"

Thompson rubbed his chin in meditation. "One doesn't wish to kill such dogs," he said slowly. "They must be

worth fifty dollars apiece, and then, no one has seen them kill a deer. No one knows for sure that they would do it. The native dog, who is only a little way from a wolf, will do it, but down in the States a dog which will kill a domestic animal is the exception. But who knows what a good dog will do in a wolf dog's company? You'll have to use your own good common sense when the time comes to decide. And whatever you do, I'll back you." He paused a moment in reflection. "But one thing is sure; our people cannot afford to lose their deer. You say the yearling belonged to old Kitmesuk? He has but five deer. He is an old man. He cannot hunt far on the ice floe now. In a year that deer would have provided him with the price of his winter's flour. Now, it is gone. Something must be done to stop it. Do what you can."

Kituk turned to go, when something fell from his fingers and thumped on the

floor; it was one of the bits of black rock which he had found at the foot of the cliff.

"What's that?" Thompson picked it up and studied it curiously.

"I don't know. Do you?"

"No, I don't,—some kind of quartz though, I guess. May I keep it?"

"Yes, sulie," ("more") said Kituk, as he held out the other pieces.

"Where did you find them?"

"Lost River, about four miles from the beach."

The boy left the room, but for a long time the government man sat in his chair, puzzling over the three bits of quartz. He knew little enough about mining. He had yet to buy his first pick and pan. His prime business in this cold land was to help the Eskimo people, not to wander over the hills in search of the illusive "color." But when opportunity knocks at your very door, what man can resist? Perhaps I might say, who has a right to resist, especially if he has a mother

and younger sisters depending upon him for support? And opportunity seemed knocking at his door now; knocking loudly, too.

He had seen a few specimens of tin quartz, and as he studied these specimens, he became more and more convinced that this was placer tin which had been carried down by the river.

For five years it had been known that there was quartz tin on Cape Prince of Wales Mountain; and nowhere else in the North American continent had it been discovered. A good tin mine was as good as a gold mine. But Cape Prince of Wales Mountain was right at the sea; no streams had their rise on its slopes, consequently no one had ever thought of searching for placer tin on the streams, though they had all been diligently panned for gold. Now, if this Eskimo boy had discovered a trace of placer tin on Lost River, only four miles from its source, and if there should prove to be heavy lodes of it on

bedrock, but fifteen feet below the surface, somebody's fortune was made, several somebodies', — and why not his own and the fortune of Kituk? For a time he dreamed of the things he would do for his younger sisters, of the home he would buy for his mother; of the things, also, which the generous-hearted Kituk could do for his people.

"We'll have to have some practical miner in with us," he thought to himself. "Who shall it be?" He instantly thought of Joe Luther. There was not a better-informed miner on the entire coast and, indeed, there was no other miner, good or bad, for sixty miles up and down the coast. But at once he thought of the feud between Luther and the Eskimo. "If only things were different," he sighed, as he placed the bits of quartz on the window sill and went about his work.

CHAPTER XVI

A GRATEFUL MINER

"He said he'd back me, whatever I did," Kituk murmured to himself, as he raised the hammer to his rifle. "He said to use my good common sense."

Kituk understood this expression but imperfectly, yet he had a sense of what it meant; an instinct told him that it meant that he must act wisely.

Before him lay a narrow valley. Stampeding down that valley was the herd of fifteen hundred reindeer, and behind them, a gray streak showing sharply through the snow clouds, was Luther's leader. Here, then, was the culprit! Could there be a doubt of it now? He was caught in the very act! Had it not been this dog that had killed Kitmesuk's

yearling and robbed him of his year's supply of flour? Kituk raised his rifle; then he lowered it again. He must use his good common sense. What should he do?

A half mile away on the hillside there appeared the form of a giant miner. He had come up from the tundra by the sea. He had been following the trail of a dog. It was Luther. In an instant his eye took in the panorama that was being played out by the boy, the dog, and the deer on the silent white foreground of snow. He saw the rifle in the boy's hand rise, and his face became livid with rage. His own hand gripped his rifle barrel till the blood vessels stood out like whipcords and his fingers turned blue. It was his leader.

A dog? More than a dog! Almost a human being to him. Five years the dog had served him. Now like a flash he saw the weary trail, — Dawson, Fairbanks, Valdese, Circle City, Nome, — all these spread before him, joined one to the other by wild passes and wind-blown rivers.

And over all these this leader had brought him in safety. He saw, too, a deserted cabin where he lay ill with only this dog to guard him and to bring him aid at last. And now — now? Was this leader, his more than friend, to die such a death? It was impossible. Instinctively he raised his rifle, and aimed at the boy. Instantly he came to himself, with a shudder at thought of what he willed to do. He threw the rifle from him, only to snatch it up an instant later. This time it was aimed at the old gray leader, who was running slowly now, an easy shot from where he stood. If this, his friend, must die, let it be by his hand; it were kinder so.

But from one corner of his eye he saw the Eskimo boy lower his rifle once more, then lay it down and put one hand to his mouth. An instant after there sounded out on the still air a shrill whistle. At sound of it the great, gray dog turned, hesitated an instant, then started slowly back toward the Eskimo boy.

Luther dropped limply to the hard-crusted snow. The rifle clattered from his nerveless hand, while something like "Thank God!" escaped from his trembling lips.

A moment later he saw the Eskimo boy reach down and grasp the chain which the leader dragged in the snow. Hearing the ring of footsteps on the hard-packed snow behind him, as he led the dog to his tent, Kituk turned to face the miner. He held the chain out to him in silence.

"Thanks." There was a deep hoarse tremble in the man's voice, but that was all he said, as he turned and tramped away, followed by his dog.

The four hours of midwinter daylight had faded by the time the miner reached his cabin. After chaining the leader carefully to his kennel, he heaped a great tray of food for him, and turning toward the Cape, started directly away without pausing to enter the cabin for food. Stolidly he tramped along, his head down, making

the bends of the winding road, the path that led about Cape Prince of Wales Mountain to the government man's house and the Eskimo village. The ice piles cast great dark shadows everywhere, and here and there great white pillars reared to the sky like graven stones. Over it all the golden moon shone in all its glory. The cool night breeze fanned the man's cheek, but he saw nothing, felt nothing. He was living within himself, and at times his thoughts were far away. At length he reached the foot of the mountain on the other side, and climbing the path which led to the government man's house, entered without knocking.

Thompson, who was just putting a kettle of mulligan on the stove, glanced over the yellow blaze of his candle with the expectation of seeing one of his Eskimo, and gave a start as he realized who his visitor was.

"You know that wood we was talking about last week," Luther began hastily,

before Thompson had finished his surprised "Hello!" "You know that wood. Well, you just tell the natives to come over and get it, any of it, all of it, any time they need it. I — I guess I've been an old fool." Again Thompson was too astonished to speak. "What has come over the man?" he thought to himself.

"Say," the miner went on, as he twisted his squirrel-skin cap in his hand and sat on the edge of a chair like a schoolboy, "you know that Eskimo boy, Kituk. Well, that's some boy! He could have killed my leader to-day, and had a right, and he didn't. And you don't know what that leader means to me! No, you don't; you haven't lived in this land long enough for that."

"What'd he do?" asked Thompson, at last finding his tongue, as he began to see through things.

"Well, sir, he just whistled him back. Where's there another Eskimo that would think to do a thing like that?"

"Kituk's different," Thompson said slowly. "I guess he used his common sense. He had my permission to kill the dog, and I told him I'd back him. But he likes dogs. He admires your dogs. I've often heard him speak of them. But all the same, if it's not your dogs that are getting our deer, I'd like to know what is! That's a problem that is not solved, and perhaps you can help us solve it."

For some time the two white men sat and talked by the yellow candle light. They talked of mining, of deer herds, of the Eskimos, and as they talked, the tie which binds real men together, once they understand each other, grew stronger.

At last Thompson rose and smiling said, "Excuse me, but I think the mulligan's done. Let's eat."

It was only after the meal had been eaten and they were once more sitting by the fire that Thompson took down from the window sill the samples of quartz

which Kituk had found. He handed them to the miner.

"That's tin; placer tin," the miner exclaimed, excited in an instant. "Where'd you get it?"

"The Eskimo boy who saved your dog to-day found it on Lost River, four miles from the beach."

It was good to see the old look fade from the miner's face, and the look of real boyish enthusiasm come in its stead.

"Young man," he said slowly, "if there's enough of it there, you and that Eskimo boy have made your fortunes."

"And also a miner by the name of Luther"; the government man smiled back. "We'll have to have a practical miner in with us."

The miner held the hand of the younger man in a grip of iron. "Young man, you can trust me."

"I know it! Even before you told me you were going to be the Eskimo man's friend."

Far into the night the two men discussed the plans for this new prospect; how they would borrow the steam-boiler from the tin mining company and sled it over to the Lost River claims, which they must stake at once. How they would sink a shaft through the frozen ground to bed rock by thawing first and digging after; how they would prospect in this way till the pocket was discovered, and then how they would sack their ore and cart it to the beach to be carried away to the smelters on the "outside."

"But we'll have to have coal!" exclaimed the miner, "and there isn't an extra hundred pounds down at the cabin."

For an instant it seemed that all their well-laid plans would come to naught, when suddenly the miner leaped to his feet.

"I know," he exclaimed; "the *Sadie* went aground on the sand bar twenty miles above here last fall."

"Yes?"

"Well, she was loaded with coal."

"Who owned her?"

"The company I work for, and I know she is high and dry, for I was by there not many weeks ago. The boss'll let us take all the coal we need, for she'll break up when the ice goes out."

Picking up his cap, the miner went on his way back to his cabin. This time he saw the glory of the moonlight and the great shadows of the night. He bared his brow to the night air, and something very near a prayer of thanksgiving and benediction welled up in his soul.

The next morning Luther called his employer by telephone and asked permission to save the coal and haul some of it down on Kituk's gasoline schooner before the shore ice broke up.

"Sure," exclaimed the magnate heartily. "Take all you can use. It's Wainwright coal and not very good; pretty well slacked by this time, I guess, but it'll do. Don't want to tell me what you've got up there that's so interesting?"

"Not yet."

"All right, don't. And say, — if you can save the steamer along with the coal, you're welcome. We've got a line on her, but we don't intend doing anything about it. Guess you can't either, but if you can, go ahead!"

"I wonder if we could," the miner mused, as he hung up the receiver and turned to his work.

CHAPTER XVII

KITUK A PRISONER

"I DON'T understand it," said Thompson, shaking his head, "It's all very puzzling. You say there is always one deer missing beside the one the wolf or dog kills? That isn't the way deer run away from the herd, is it? If they leave the herd it is almost always in twos and threes, or more, isn't it?"

"Almost always," said Kituk.

For a time the two sat in silence. The herd had been stampeded and driven away six times that winter, and always two deer had been missing. Nearly always one was found killed by dogs or wolves, but never more than one. This problem must be solved. Was it Luther's dogs, after all? If so, what became of the other deer each

time? They were slow to believe it could be the dogs. But wolves are seldom seen on the coast. What could it be?

The matter was becoming serious. Time and again men had lost deer who, like old Kitmesuk, could ill afford to lose them, and there seemed to be no stopping the raids, for though the herders had sought far and wide for wolves and had set traps for them, none had been captured.

"One strange thing about it," said Kituk at last, "is that they always go toward Ear Mountain when they are stampeded."

"That may be an accident and it may be a sign," said Thompson. "You better take Tdariuk and drive over that way some day. It may be that there is a wolf's den over there."

Tdariuk was the finest sled deer of the whole herd. Many of the deer were wild and foolish; not so Tdariuk. He could be driven with two lines, and answered to

the guide of the reins as surely as the best horse in the world. It was always a pleasure to drive him, and it was with a bounding heart that the Eskimo boy welcomed such an adventurous trip with such a steed. He resolved to be away the very next morning.

On the next morning he was indeed on his way, but under quite other conditions than he had expected. The herd had been stampeded again during the night and had gone as before toward Ear Mountain, which on a clear day might be seen from the Cape, looming away in the distance.

Hastily harnessing the splendid sled deer, Kituk called one of the herders to join him, and went spinning away over the trail of the deer herd. Here and there he saw once more the tracks of the wolf or dog who had done the mischief. These they had followed for twenty miles, when seeing the trail on a ridge beyond, and here having taken a short cut, Kituk noticed some strange indications of a track in the

hard-crusted snow. This track, or whatever it was, had made the same short cut he was taking. Here Kituk lost it, and here he found it again. There was really no distinctive track, such as a man makes on snowshoes or skis; nor such as the great white bear or gray wolf makes. It was merely a denting of the hard snow here, the scraping of the edge of a snow ridge there; that was all, and for rods at a time there would be nothing at all. Had it not taken the same general direction Kituk was following, he might have lost it at once. As it was he became accustomed to following the peculiar indications of a track, and even after it had crossed the trail of the reindeer herd, or the trail of the herd had crossed it, — he was unable at once to tell which, — he was able to pick it up again and follow it beyond where the herd had at last stopped and the carcass of a young deer showed where the beast had caught its prey. It had not been the owner of this strange track which had killed the

deer; that plainly was a wolf or a dog. But what was this strange track? The mystery of it fascinated the Eskimo boy. Looking to the loading of his rifle he bade the Eskimo herder return to camp with the deer, while he went on toward Ear Mountain, which was now but fifteen miles to the southward.

As he followed the strange trail, Kituk became more and more convinced that the creature which made it was not at any time following the deer, but had gone in the opposite direction.

Strange sensations passed over him as he came nearer and nearer to the great white mountain, which now seemed to loom directly over him. The Eskimo people seldom visited this mountain. Some of them said it was inhabited by evil spirits. Kituk, of course, did not believe this. But what sort of a creature was it that perhaps did inhabit the mountain, and made such undistinguishable tracks, and which he felt sure was in some strange

way connected with the disappearance of the reindeer?

Tdariuk's hoofs cracked together as she trotted forward, guided now and then by a pull of the line. Aside from this there was not a sound to greet the ear. When Kituk halted the reindeer to get a better look at the track in the snow, a death-like silence pervaded all. It was almost spooky, and the spell was not lessened by the silent fall of twilight. Darkness would soon reign over the land; but not for long, for this was near the springtime, and soon the sun would be shining day and night. The nights now were hardly four hours long, and it mattered little to the boy whether he found shelter or not. He had food on his sled and a sleeping bag. As for Tdariuk, there was plenty of reindeer moss beneath the crusted snow for him, and he knew well enough how to obtain it.

Kituk was thinking of these things when he noted a dark spot, like the opening to a cavern, just before him in the side of the

mountain. He slowed the deer down to a walk. As they approached the mountain they made not the least noise. They were within twenty feet of the opening into the side of the mountain, when Kituk stopped his deer altogether and gripped his rifle. Here was a strange thing. He had known many men who had visited Ear Mountain, but from none of them had he heard of a cave in the side of the mountain. And yet here it was, all covered with snow, it is true, yet an opening apparently leading right into the mountain. And the strange tracks led straight to it! What sort of a beast lived here? White bears often left the ocean ice floes and wandered away into the mountains for rest. Kituk had frequently seen such tracks leading away shoreward. If this were a white bear, some one must have plucked out his toenails, for here was not the least scratch on the surface of the snow. Kituk's mind worked quickly. There could be only one creature living there, a man!

"Hands up!" The sharp command came from behind the boy. He had not thought to look behind him as he traveled. Now, as he did look about, he instinctively obeyed the command, for two rough-looking men stood not twenty feet from him with rifles leveled at his head. At their feet lay two hind-quarters of reindeer, and on their feet were snowshoes covered on the bottom with split walrus skin. These, then, had made the tracks. He had made the discovery, however, too late. He was trapped.

One of the men came forward and tied the boy's hands behind him. The other followed, as they led him into the opening in the mountain, which proved to be only a rough snow house lined with canvas and splashed over on the outside with water and snow to hide the marks of their snow knife. This was evidently a robber's den. There were signs everywhere of the feasts they had had on the Eskimos' reindeer during the long winter. Deerskins lined

the wall; deerskin mukluks hung drying on the lines, while half a dozen deer legs were tanning in a corner. They had doubtless trained their dogs to stampede the deer; had killed one for themselves and allowed the dogs to kill another as a blind. "The wasteful brutes!" Kituk hissed under his breath. But he was due for further shocks.

"It's as well we got the kid," one of the men was saying; "it's time we were getting out of here. We'll need the sled deer to help haul the stuff, and we can kill him for meat later. See?"

"Kill Tdariuk for meat!" Kituk's blood boiled. "Kill Tdariuk!" Tdariuk was worth five meat deer! Besides, he was a pet and prize of the herd. It did not seem possible that these rough men could do such a thing. Yet to remonstrate was useless. There was nothing he could do at present. He would be carefully watched, and he must bide his time.

Two hours had elapsed since Kituk had

been led into the hut when a third man entered, bringing two snarling gray wolf-hounds with him. These had been the accomplices of the robbers; they were the ones which had nearly caused the death of Luther's splendid leader.

The man threw Kituk some bits of raw reindeer meat. "Raw meat's what these huskies eat," one of them grumbled to another. Kituk ate as best he could, for he must be strong and ready for every emergency.

The men were all white men, but they spoke brokenly and with a foreign accent. Sometimes they spoke in an entirely different language from any he had ever heard before. From the drift of their conversation, he became sure that they were planning to leave at once. But where might they go that the strong arm of the white man's law could not catch them? He thought for a long time. At last he remembered. Where, sure enough? Would they dare it? Only three of them? What

would they do with him? Would they take him with them? How could they go?

One of the men had been out for some time. When he returned, he talked long and excitedly in low tones. Kituk could catch only a word now and then. One of the words which came out oftenest was "Reindeer." They all seemed very much disturbed. Could it be possible that Tdariuk had escaped and gone back to the herd? How he hoped it was true! But his mind was quickly turned from these thoughts, for the men were beginning to make preparations for departure and demanded that he assist in the packing, though they kept his feet loosely tied together that he might not escape.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RESCUE

One thought cheered Kituk as he struggled along, dragging away at the heavy load of reindeer meat: old Tdariuk was safe from the clutches of the three villains who had taken him prisoner. Just how he had escaped was a question, but that he had escaped was beyond doubt. He was not there helping with the loads of meat, and his meat was not on the sled, so he must be free.

They had made only a short distance that first night. They had camped in the midst of the willows that skirted the banks of the Little Koebuck River during the day. Kituk had prayed that none of his Eskimo friends would come upon them unawares, for it would mean sure death.

The men took turns watching while the others slept. It became more and more apparent that these were desperate fellows who would stop at nothing. At times Kituk wondered what his own fate would be; but for the most part he thought only of the immediate future when the galling harness would once more be across his back, while the three men cursed at him and at the dogs, first in English and then in that strange tongue which was so unfamiliar to him.

Just at dusk they started once more on their journey, the robbers keeping a sharp watch out for signs of miners or reindeer herders, while they urged the two tired gray dogs and Kituk to added effort in the harness. To the Eskimo boy, accustomed as he was to the great freedom of his own people, this slavery was almost worse than death, but he braced his heart for the continued ordeal, inspired by the thought that he might yet live to escape.

The men were heading toward the sea. It was evident that they intended to reach Bering Straits and cross them. But how? They had no boat. Even if they had one, perhaps the Straits had not cleared of the winter's ice floes. They were taking an awful risk, for they could not remain long on the shore ice without detection. Surely they did not mean to attempt to cross the Straits on the floating ice? An Eskimo might do this with his power of endurance and his great knowledge of ice floes, but a white man, never!

Suddenly Kituk gave a start. The whaleboats! Why had he not thought of them before? Yes, they meant to steal a whaleboat, one of his people's great skin boats, and cross the Straits in it! Every year at this time in the spring, the Eskimo drew their great skin boats far out on the solid shore ice, two miles from land. Here they reared them high on ice piles and kept a watch day and night for whales. This watch was

kept from their homes on the side of Cape Prince of Wales Mountain. If a whale was sighted, there was the boat call, "Tomai! Tomai!" and at once all the hunters rushed down to the beach, across the shore ice, and launching their thirty-five-foot skin boats, went after the great black prey which meant so much for them, if they chanced to be fortunate in the hunt. These, also, were their walrus-hunting canoes. The loss of one of these canoes would mean the loss of many walrus, and would cause starvation or near starvation for the families of the ten brave fellows who manned the canoe.

As Kituk thought of this, he felt a cold wave of hatred run through his body. He wanted to tell the men to kill him if they would. But this would only mean suicide; they would not hesitate to kill him. Then, if necessary, they would put their own shoulders in the harness and have their way all the same. Perhaps the time would come when he might effectively

block their progress; this would be worth his life. He would struggle on.

Meanwhile, things were happening in the herder's camp. Tdariuk, the sled deer, had returned. They had found him one morning among his comrades. But his carefully whittled half-collars of wood, with the heavy strap fastened to them, were still on his shoulders. The strap was slapping between his legs. His halter strap was broken close to his head.

"Look!" exclaimed Allockeok, one of the herders. "Something must have gone wrong!"

"Yes," said another, "he has broken loose and come home."

"Worse than that," said Allockeok excitedly, "Kituk never tied him in the first place. He is not the fellow to unfasten him from his sled and leave the harness on him. That is contrary to our rules, as you know, and Kituk is a first-class herder. Some one else has tied Tdariuk. Either Kituk is sick among

friends, or something worse has happened to him. We must find Tdariuk's tracks and follow them."

Hastily loading their rifles, and calling on the yellow collie dog to follow them, they cut off across the tundra toward Ear Mountain. The yellow dog was soon on the trail of Tdariuk and was back-tracking him at a rate that would have tired any but these hardy denizens of the north. They reached the snow shack in the side of the mountain just at dusk of the second day after the robbers had left it.

Every indication here went only to confirm their fears for Kituk. They no longer believed him to be ill; they were quite sure of the real truth of the matter, as soon as they had had a good look at the snow house.

"Looks bad!" said Allockeok, tightening the string to his parka and turning to follow this new trail. But the others were not so hardy as this leader of theirs.

They must have a bite to eat and an hour's rest. Allockeok, chafing at this delay, walked about for half an hour, then caught a wink of sleep and was ready to proceed with the others.

"They are making for Bering Straits!" said Allockeok, after they had followed in silence for three hours. "The floe ice cleared from the channel two days ago. Ah-ne-ca! Will they steal a skin boat?"

"Matna!" exclaimed another. "There are not more than three of them. How could they launch it?"

"With the pooksacks they could do it easily." The pooksacks were skins of bearded seal, sewed air-tight, and filled with air. These were used by the natives as rollers, and on them the boats could easily be skidded into the water.

"We might as well leave their trail and go directly to Cape Prince of Wales. We can travel in daylight that way, and can get help at the village," advised Allockeok.

On the third night from the Ear Moun-

tain camp, Kituk found himself staggering along among the giant ice piles that gleamed white in the moonlight. He had fallen three times from exhaustion, but the men, now adding their strength to the load, had dragged him to his feet each time and with many a curse and cuff had bade him "Mush!" Yet he had not given up hope. For generation after generation his ancestors had not suffered from cold, darkness, and famine for naught. His was a sturdy soul.

Suddenly, he thought he caught a glimpse of a dark spot above an ice pile. Numbed as he was by pain, his eyes were yet sharper than those of his captors. Could it be that something had happened to tell his people of his trouble? Had they come to his rescue? His heart beat wildly. How they could shoot, those hunters of the great white bear and the walrus! He knew the end of any encounter between them and these ruffians.

He gave a quick lunge forward and fell

flat upon his pull rope. With a curse two of the men went sprawling after him. Instantly there was a sharp command.

"Hands up! You!" Kituk recognized the gruff voice of the miner, Luther. At the same instant, he saw the gleam of a dozen rifle barrels. They seemed to be protruding from behind every ice pile and pillar.

There was no shooting. The ruffians, always cowards at heart, realizing that they were surrounded by great odds and that they had no chance to fight their way to safety, threw up their hands and were soon disarmed.

Tender hands lifted the exhausted boy from the harness and bathed his swollen shoulders. Then in triumph they carried him away to the village on the sled which he had helped to draw with so much pain.

The next day, in answer to a 'phone call, the deputy United States Marshal from Teller came to the Cape to take the robbers to jail.

"They are Russian exiles who escaped across the Straits some months ago," the deputy explained. "Not political prisoners, but real criminals. Dangerous fellows, too! You are fortunate to be alive," he said, turning to Kituk. "They'd kill in a minute! They have doubtless disguised themselves and worked in a mine. That's how they got a little of our language. But they soon found what seemed an easier way. Thanks to you, their forays are now at an end."

"Thanks to Tdariuk," said Kituk modestly.

"Tdariuk should have a gold ring for his antlers," said the deputy.

"And so he should have, if he didn't have such a bad habit of shedding his old antlers every year," smiled Thompson; "but as it is, I think the greatest honor we can bestow upon him is to give him for a master his best-loved driver, Kituk. What do you say, Kituk? How'd you like that?"

"I'd like nothing better," smiled Kituk, choking a bit. "He's the king of the herd."

"And may you drive him for many a winter," said Thompson heartily, as he prepared to start the deputy and his charges on their way.

Luther was overjoyed at this conclusive proof that it had not been his dogs that had stampeded the deer. The incident served to strengthen the bond between the three partners, who were soon to enter on the new mining venture. In a very few days, as soon as they were sure the Straits were permanently cleared of floe ice, they would go pop-popping away to the Northward in the *Sea Wolf* to determine what might be done about the *Sadie* and her cargo of coal.

CHAPTER XIX

SAVING THE *SADIE*

CLIMBING to the top of a sand dune by the beach, Thompson looked away toward the point on which the *Sadie* had stranded. There she was now, her masts rearing in air, her hull standing out black against the whiteness of the ice which crowded about her on every side. She had been tossed high on the sand bar by the waves, but they had not been strong enough to break her. After that, the ice had crowded about her and sealed her up as solidly as the salmons in their cans. Ever since the miner had told him of the gift of the ship to their company, providing they were able to launch her, he had dreamed of ways that might bring her off the sand bar, and once more into service.

She was not much of a craft. Large enough to be sure, — too large, in fact. She had been brought north in the boom days, loaded down with hopeful miners. She burned coal, and coal in this land was too expensive as fuel; she had soon been driven from the sea by the cheaper gasoline crafts. This company which owned her now had decided to make her earn her fuel. They would take her to Wainwright, where there were low-grade coal mines in the very hills that overshadowed the sea. They would load her with coal, and with supply on hand, they could use her with profit for freighting along the coast south of Nome. But here she was driven on the sand bar and deserted by her owners, who had concluded at last to abandon her.

There is something appealing and romantic about a good ship left stranded on the beach to be torn and racked by the storms, and at last to sink into the engulfing sands to be forgotten forever.

This was one of the motives which inspired the boy, as he looked away at the craft. He believed, also, that the company's plan had been a good one. They had hired the wrong skipper, that was all, and he had run the *Sadie* on the sand. How then could he bring her off the sand bar and back into service? She was directly on the point of the sand bar. The ice floe would be driving north when the break-up came, but instead of taking her with it, the probability was that it would crush her sides in, and pass on, leaving her a prey to the waves. If only some means might be employed for carrying her off the point with the ice, she might yet fly the Stars and Stripes for many a year, doing valuable service on the low-grade Wainwright coal. But how?

As he stood there thinking, his mind went back over the winter months when with Luther, the miner, and Kituk, the Eskimo boy, he had spent hour after hour making plans for the placer tin mine

which they hoped would develop into a reality in the spring. They had gone to the spot on the Lost River and staked out their claims. Luther had staked one for his boy, Thompson one for his mother, and Kituk one for his father, making six claims in all. These were all duly recorded in Nome. A contract had been drawn up, with very simple rules, it is true, and with very few conditions, but a very binding contract withal, for they were all honest men.

When the days had lengthened till there were no nights at all, and the south wind had driven all the main ice floe to the northward, leaving the Straits black with tossing sea water, they had dragged the *Sea Wolf* to the water's edge, over the two miles of solid shore ice which would remain for two or three weeks yet, and Kituk with two Eskimo companions had set sail for the ice nearest the point where the *Sadie* was stranded. Thompson and the miner had driven a team of horses

overland. These they would use in hauling some of the coal to the *Sea Wolf*, and the remainder to land where it might be picked up later.

Thompson thought all this over, and then once again his mind turned to the problem of bringing the *Sadie* off the bar. And all at once a new thought came to him. Would it work? Well, at least the first thing would be to get the coal unloaded. They must get at that at once.

Two hours later they were all working faithfully at the heavy and dirty task of moving the low-grade coal to the *Sea Wolf* and to land. For a week, assisted by three Eskimo, they toiled unremittingly, pausing only for meals and a few hours of sleep. The sun was now shining day and night. They might work during the midnight or noonday hours and sleep as they pleased.

When this work was completed, there came a few hours of exciting work, while they placed the anchor and cable of the

ship in such a position as to enable it to assist the ship to move outward with the ice floe. Dragging the anchor far out on the ice floe, they attached its heavy chain and drew it tight. They then built a fire over it and allowed it to sink deep into the melting ice.

"Now," said Thompson, as the work was completed, "when the ice drift comes crowding on the shore ice from the south, the ice will be driven from the bar, and if the cable holds, the ship will be carried with it out to sea. To be sure, she is stuck a bit on the sand, but we have lightened her up by unloading the coal, and once she is free from the ice, which will have melted about her, I believe she will be light enough to loosen from the sand by the pull of the ice driven by the current and the great pressure behind it. There will be power enough, surely. Think of the force of the current on an ice floe fifteen or twenty miles long and six feet thick at every point! The only question is,

will the cable hold, and will the ice cake remain whole or will it split? If the cable breaks, or the ice cake splits, we are lost."

It was a long weary wait of eight days before the ice gave signs of loosening from the increasing pressure of the ice floes which had swept in from the Yukon Flats, and were now pressing with giant force all along the outer edge of the shore ice. Already the sun had melted the ice all along the south side of the schooner. There was a space of blue water there two feet wide, and it seemed to the watchers that at times they could see the steamer rise and fall, as if she were already free from the sand bar, but of this they could not be sure, for it might be only the rise and fall of the loosening shore ice. Every day they went to the anchor and studied its position and the condition of the ice. All seemed well.

"It's going out to-day," said Luther, as he stepped from the tent one morning and looked away at the white ice. This

seemed true, for already great cakes of ice were swinging in line with the main floe, while here and there great flats were rising in air and crumbling one upon another. It was a sight not to be soon forgotten; those mighty powers, — the ocean, the ice floor, and spring, — doing battle to the death. But spring and the ocean were bound to win now and to hold sway for the short summer through.

Closer and closer came the cleavage of shore ice; closer and closer to the ship, and the three partners stood watching with breathless suspense.

"The cake's split!" Luther suddenly cried in dismay, as he went racing from the sand dune to the shore. Sure enough, the cake on which the anchor had been imbedded had split right at the point where the anchor had been placed. Instantly all seemed lost. It seemed impossible but that the anchor would slip down into this crack farther and farther, till at last it imbedded its great weight

in the soft sand of the shallow bed, and thus prove a menace rather than a help, a thing which held the schooner between one great cake and the ice floe like a nut in a vice.

But by some strange chance, as the ice floe crowded the cake more and more out to sea, the anchor rose upon the edge of the ice cake and began slipping along so close that every moment it seemed as if it would fall into the sea. With eyes strained, the three watched. Now it was dragged so close to the brink that it seemed only a breath of wind would be required to topple it into the sea. And now they drew a relieved breath, for the anchor moved slightly away from the dangerous crack, which every moment grew wider.

But again the ice cake swerved, and making an angle with the anchor chain, dragged the anchor closer, closer to the chasm.

The main ice cake by this time had

broken in two places. The breaks were perpendicular each to each. The crack along which the anchor was dragging ran only halfway to the steamer. Should the anchor drag far enough along the edge of the chasm to allow it to hang down over the cake without touching bottom, there was yet a chance that the remaining ice cake would drag the steamer free from the sand bar and set her afloat.

So they watched the anchor being dragged constantly nearer to the verge at an angle that now could mean but a few more moments of suspense. Thompson, with his knowledge of mathematics, automatically computed the time it would take to bring the anchor into the water.

"The water'll have to be fifteen feet deep at that point," he said, half unconsciously.

"It's twenty everywhere along there," smiled the miner.

"Then we're safe." Thompson sighed, as he dropped to a seat on the sand.

And they were, for as the anchor at last plunged into the water, the chain instantly began taking in slack, and very soon the top of the anchor appeared above the water. One prong of it had caught beneath the lower surface of the six-foot ice cake and there it held, while the schooner and the ice cakes joined in a creaking and groaning contest that seldom is equaled. But the schooner swung half around at last, in line with the ice, and began its outward course.

With a hoarse shout, the three men rushed to the ice cakes just in time to leap aboard of them and to join their ship, as she swung out to sea.

In a few hours steam was up. Slowly the ice cakes separated and left room for them to pass between. Then they steamed away toward Port Clarence.

CHAPTER XX

SUCCESS AT LAST

THOMPSON, looking away at the dripping hillsides, listening to the rush of the milky waters of Lost River, allowed a heavy sigh to escape from his lips and his brow to wrinkle in a frown. It was not the dripping hillsides of springtime, nor the rushing waters of Lost River that troubled him. The ground in their "diggin's" was frozen solid, and it was only necessary to drain the surface water away from their shaft and all was well. But all was not well otherwise. Luther was slaving away with pick and shovel and steam; he was fifteen feet below in the shaft, or Thompson would not have allowed the sigh to escape, or his brow to wrinkle. He was keeping up courage,

or at least seeming to, for Luther's sake. This was the sixth shaft they had sunk in the last month, and always it had been the same story: A few lumps of tin here and there mixed with the gravel, but not enough to pay even for the sluicing, let alone shipping and smelting. Truly, it was disheartening. Luther had selected the spot which seemed most likely to cover the load of placer tin, but always it had been the same story, though they moved first twenty feet this way, then twenty feet that, and then twenty in some other direction.

Sometimes Kituk had manned the windlass and coaled the steam-thawer, sometimes it had been Thompson — all this depending upon the demands of their other duties. Luther had taken a month's leave of absence, and had worked almost constantly below, relieved only now and then by one of his partners.

For ten days now Thompson had kept up hope for the sake of his partner Luther.

Who knew what utter failure would mean to this brawny miner? Time and time again he had answered to the beckon of hope, only to find that he had followed a will-o'-the-wisp. Now, after three years of gloom and well-nigh despair, he had answered and followed once more. How black, then, would be his despair, if all were lost once more? As for Thompson, it was quite otherwise. It was his first venture. He was young. He might also return to his regular duties and be content with his slender income, so long as it sufficed for him and for his family's needs. It was the same with Kituk. But for Luther they had hoped and toiled on. Now they had come to the bottom of the sixth shaft with the same old result, — no tin. In a few moments Luther would call to be lifted from the shaft with the windlass, and then what? Thompson hardly dared ask himself. Would Luther have the courage for another attempt? If so, in what direction would it be? Would he and

Kituk stick to their post? He knew they would. Luther must be the first to say, "I've had enough."

"All right, pull me out," came from below, and a moment later Luther stood beside him, a look of puzzled dismay on his face.

"I don't understand," he said; "I know the tin is there. Why don't we strike it?"

He walked to the overhanging bank and examined it carefully. Then he walked on up the stream, still examining the lay of the land. "I may have misjudged the old bend of the stream," he mumbled to himself, "but if we dig here, we'll have to sink a shaft parallel with the stream and then drift under it. We'll do it!" His lips tightened. He returned to his partner.

"We've got to get our steamer up on that bank and sink a shaft there, then drift under the stream. The stream may have changed its course."

This new turn seemed madness, but Thompson had committed himself to the last move of the splendid old miner. So after hours of strenuous labor the boiler was in place and the steam pipe was being driven into the grass-covered clay bank for the first shovel of dirt. Here the shaft must be twenty-five feet deep. They had sent Kituk for additional wire-wound hose for conveying the steam, and were preparing for a siege of the hard, unyielding earth, which had been frozen for who knows how many centuries?

They were five days in sinking this shaft, and when at last they were nearing the end, Luther, signaling to be hauled up, told Thompson to go below and let the Eskimo boy tend him while he caught a bit of a nap. He seemed utterly exhausted, and at the same time a trifle excited.

"Perhaps he thinks this time he has found it. Let us hope so," said Thompson, as he prepared to go below. "They

say that old miners have — what is it they call them? — hunches, I think. Let's hope it is the right hunch this time."

For a time he wielded his pick and shovel, and drove his steam pipes as before, but soon his steam pipe struck something hard. It was the solid rock! He made a rapid mental calculation, and concluded at this point the rock was five feet higher than in their previous diggings. For an instant his heart sank; then it gave a great bound. If this were true, and it seemed beyond dispute, and if he were to drift to the right under the stream, he would at last come to the ledge of the rock where it had been worn away by the constant wash of the stream in its old bed, and who dared think what might be found in that five-foot drop of deposit which lay beside the solid rock?

Feverishly, and in silence, he worked away till he had rounded out the shaft to the solid rock; then he began to drift toward the stream. Now he could hear

the dull thud of the stream above him, as it dashed against the hard clay bank above. But here ten feet of solid frozen earth protected him. Who could wish for more? So he labored on, while the miner slept the drug-like sleep of utter exhaustion in the tent above.

He had drifted away to the right for five feet. His arms ached; his head whirled with the exertion. Kituk was uttering "Matnas" and "Ah-ne-cas" at the amount of dirt he was compelled to windlass to the surface, when at last Thompson gave a great shout. He had drifted away from the edge of the solid rock and out over the old bed of the stream for three feet, when, on cleaning the dirt and gravel from the bottom of his hole, he had found that the surface beneath was literally paved with tin ore!

"Let's see!" Luther had wakened at the shout, and had rather tumbled than been lowered to the bottom of the shaft. The stoical Eskimo boy sat at the open-

ing, cheerfully munching a pilot biscuit he had taken from the cooking kit.

Thompson drew to one side and allowed the miner to enter the side drift. He flashed the flickering candle about for an instant, then he fell to his knees. "We've found it! Thank God, we've found it!" he murmured, half to himself. Then for a long time both men were silent.

When Luther rose he seemed half in a daze. "Excuse me," he apologized. "You won't understand. You're young. But you know, when something like this happens, an old man like me has to get used to it a little at a time."

"It's all right," smiled Thompson. "You'll have the rest of your life to get used to it, I hope, and nothing much else to do."

"Nobody wants it as easy as that," said the grimy miner, as he gripped the hand of his young partner. "But it's good to win, after all."

One day, a month later, Thompson was

working at the windlass, assisted by two husky Eskimos. Luther was below in the diggin's, sending up the dirt which some Eskimos were assisting him to thaw out and load. Every third day they spent in sluicing the pay dirt and in sacking it. A bit down stream was a modest, but ever-growing, pile of ore sacks, and above were sacks of Wainwright coal for the steamer. Kituk had manned the *Sadie* with some of his own people, and had made a successful trip with her to the beach for the coal they had left there. A little later he would make a trip to Wainwright for another load of low-grade coal. They were busy and industriously happy.

Chancing to look away toward the sea, Thompson sighted a stalwart man tramping over the tundra. He recognized the magnate of Nome, and waved a salute to him. He had come on the invitation of the company, Luther, Thompson, and Kituk. He was a good man and an

honest one. He could do them no harm.

"Well," he exclaimed, as he came up. "What you got here?"

"Tin mine," said Thompson.

"Huh!" The magnate scratched his head. "Right under the grass, huh?"

"Go down and see for yourself; or are you afraid to ride the windlass rope?"

"Try me!"

A moment later Luther found his former employer standing beside him and grasping his hand. When the magnate returned to the top, the rope was sent down for Luther, and then the three partners and the magnate were standing side by side.

"You fellows have a good thing here," said the magnate warmly. "A mighty good thing! What's your plans?"

Rapidly Thompson sketched their plans; to bring coal from Wainwright, to wash their ore from the waters of Lost River, to cart their ore to the beach, and finally to carry it to San Francisco on their steamer *Sadie*.

"It's all very good but the last move," said the magnate. "I know that craft *Sadie* better than you do. Let me warn you. Never attempt the Pacific with her loaded with tin ore. She'll go to the bottom with the first storm, and you'll go with her."

The partners stood in open-mouthed consternation. They had no reason to believe the magnate's words were not true. It blocked their whole plans.

"Now I'll tell you," said the magnate slowly, "I don't want to over-persuade you, but it seems to me that you have brought the proposition to the point where capital legitimately steps in. There is such a point in all endeavor. That's a thing that some men overlook to their ruin. Now, I don't believe you fellows realize what a good thing you have here, and just to prove it to you, I'm going to make you a proposition." He paused a moment.

"You know our smelter at Tin City?"

he went on. "Well, it's rusting out for want of work. What is needed is a donkey railroad to haul the placer tin to our smelter. That won't cost much, considering the size of the proposition, but I take it you could hardly swing it. Now" — he paused again — "now, I'll give you a flat price for the first hundred tons, and after that a royalty on the remaining output of your mine."

"How much?" breathed Thompson.

The magnate wrote figures in the sand of the stream's bank. All three men breathed a long breath of astonishment.

"How can you do it?" Thompson exclaimed in surprise.

"It's the output after the first hundred tons I'm after," smiled the magnate. "If it's not there, I lose. But I believe it's there." And again he wrote in the sand the per cent of royalty he was willing to pay. "Well, what do you say?"

There was a hurried consultation of the three partners. The offer for immediate

payment was quite enough to meet the immediate wishes of all, and the royalty bade fair to supply their needs for some years to come. They were all anxious to be about other things: Thompson and Luther to be back with their families, while Kituk felt called back to his trading.

"Well, is it a go?" asked the magnate, as they returned to him. They all nodded.

"Come with me to Nome," he exclaimed. "I'll send a man to guard the place till I return to superintend operations."

A week later Kituk was enjoying his first sight of the Pacific. He was on his way "outside" to purchase his larger gasoline schooner, which was to make all the Russian points, as well as those in Alaska. Thompson with a smile had already prophesied that it would be white with red stripes.

Beside Kituk, thinking of loved ones far away but coming every hour nearer, was Thompson, and with him the miner,

Luther, who in a new store-suit and store-made shoes, looked quite the gentleman despite all his roughin' it in the Arctic wilds. They all stood in silence and watched the sun sink into the sea. In three days they would be walking the streets of Seattle; Kituk was going "outside" to buy his new schooner, and the others were going "Home."

THE END

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